

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2980
ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ROCHESTER, IND., ON
MARCH 20, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Erie
Date: March 20, 1946
Location: Rochester, Ind
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Passenger train
Train number: : 16
Engine number: : 2932
Consist: Motor-car 1327 : 5 cars
Estimated speed: Unknown : 25 m. p. h.
Operation: Signal indications
Track: Double; tangent; level
Weather: Clear
Time: 10:37 a. m.
Casualties: 2 killed
Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection for movement of track motor-car
Recommendation: That the Erie Railroad Company provide adequate train-order or block-signal protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2980

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY

April 22, 1946.

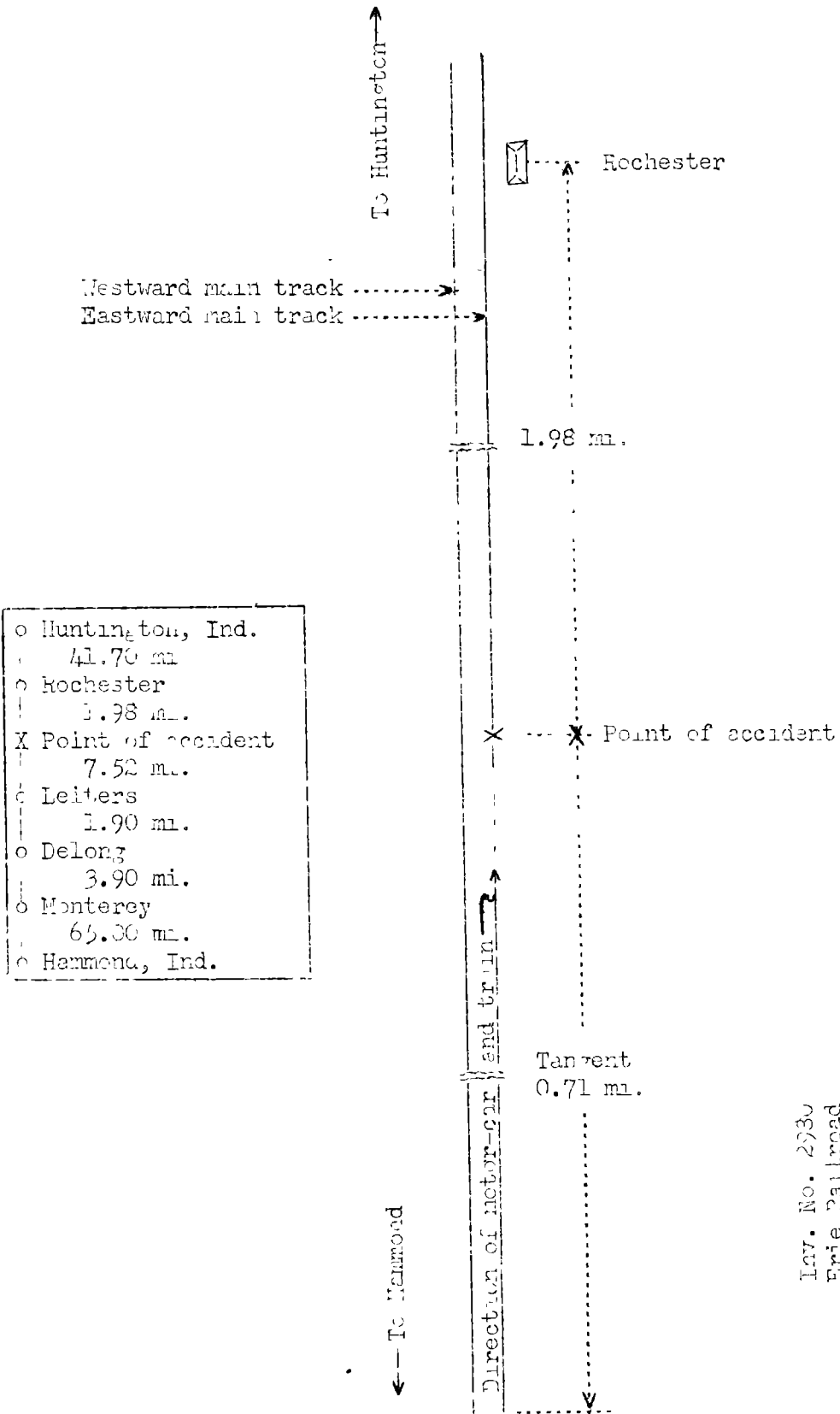
Accident near Rochester, Ind., on March 20, 1946, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 20, 1946, there was a rear-end collision
between a track motor-car and a passenger train on the
Erie Railroad near Rochester, Ind., which resulted in
the death of two employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and
disposition.



- o Huntington, Ind. 41.70 mi.
- o Rochester 1.98 mi.
- X Point of accident 7.52 mi.
- o Leiters 1.90 mi.
- o DeLong 3.90 mi.
- o Monterey 65.30 mi.
- o Hammond, Ind.

Inv. No. 2930
 Erie Railroad
 Rochester, Ind.
 March 20, 1916

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Marion Division extending between Hammond and Huntington, Ind., 122 miles, a double-track line. In the vicinity of the point of accident trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications. The accident occurred on the eastward main track 78.32 miles east of Hammond, at a point 1.93 miles west of the station at Rochester. The main tracks are tangent throughout a distance of 0.71 mile west of the point of accident and a considerable distance eastward. The grade is level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

11. A train, * * *, finding a fusee burning red on or near its track, must stop and remove or extinguish the fusee and then proceed at restricted speed. * * *

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds. * * *

Sound.	Indication.
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* * *

(p) Succession of short sounds.	Alarm * * *
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* * *

Rules governing the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

765. * * *

* * *

(g) * * * The employee in charge must see * * * that a constant lookout be kept in each direction. * * *

(h) When employees operating cars have means of communication with dispatcher or operator, they must not proceed until the dispatcher has been informed of their movement and has furnished them in writing on the prescribed form, a line-up of trains * * * operating in the section in which the movement is to be made, but this will not relieve those in charge of cars from full responsibility of protecting them. Cars must be kept clear of main tracks for all scheduled trains, and no movement must be made on the time of such trains unless full flag protection is afforded or written information is obtained from the dispatcher or operator as to the location of trains, and there is ample time to make the movement to the next open telegraph office or point of clearing main track. No open telegraph office will be passed without stopping and ascertaining the location of trains. When impracticable to communicate with the dispatcher or operator to obtain information with regard to the movement of trains, unless the track is seen or known to be clear extreme precaution must be observed and full flag protection afforded.

* * *

(r) Insulated cars must be used where tracks are bonded for transmitting current for the operation of signals or other devices.

(s) Hand and motor cars must carry the following signal equipment: six (6) torpedoes, four (4) fusees, two (2) red flags, two (2) red lanterns, and two (2) white lanterns. * * * While operating cars employees in charge must carry with them a copy of the current time-table and a standard watch. The standard watch must be * * * compared * * * daily if practicable, with a standard clock or those having standard time. * * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 75 miles per hour and for motor-cars, 20 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Track motor-car 1327 departed east-bound from a point 4.39 miles west of Rochester about 10:20 a. m., and while moving on the eastward main track at an unknown speed it was struck by No. 16.

No. 16, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 2932, one express-baggage car, two coaches,

one dining car and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train passed Delong, the last open office, 11.4 miles west of Rochester, at 10:28 a. m., 1 minute late, and while moving on the eastward main track at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it struck track motor-car 1327.

Motor-car 1327 was considerably damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 10:37 a. m.

The employees killed were a signalman and a helper.

According to data furnished by the railroad, motor-car 1327 was of the 4-wheel type, weighed 700 pounds, and was 5 feet 6 inches in length. It was powered by a 1-1/2-horsepower direct-connected gasoline motor, and was equipped with a V-shape windshield at the front end. The motor-car was insulated to prevent the shunting of signal track circuits.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that at 7:01 a. m., about 3 hours 35 minutes prior to the time the accident occurred, the train dispatcher issued by telephone to the foreman of a signal force at Monterey, 15.3 miles west of Rochester, a line-up of train movements, which included the information that No. 16, an east-bound passenger train, was on time. The signal foreman gave the line-up, which was in writing on a prescribed form, to a signalman, who was a member of the signal force and who was qualified to operate track motor-cars. The signalman was instructed to proceed eastward with three helpers on track motor-car 1327 to install signal cases on several signal foundations between Leiters, 9.5 miles west of Rochester, and Rochester. The motor-car, which was being operated by the signalman, departed from Monterey about 7:45 a. m. The crew performed work at several points between Leiters and Rochester. About 10 a. m., when the crew was at a point about 4.5 miles west of Rochester, the signalman instructed two helpers to remain at that point, then the signalman and one helper proceeded eastward on the motor-car. The motor-car departed from this point about 10:20 a. m. and was moving eastward on the eastward main track when it was struck by No. 16 at 10:37 a. m. about 2 miles west of Rochester. The signalman and the helper who accompanied him were killed. The train dispatcher and the operators at Delong and Leiters said that the signalman did not communicate with them prior to the accident to obtain further information relative to train movements.

The enginemen of No. 16 said that the engine-whistle signal was sounded in the vicinity of two highway grade-crossings

located 0.59 and 0.39 mile west of the point where the accident occurred. They first saw the preceding motor-car about 1,500 feet distant. Then the engineer made a service brake-pipe reduction and sounded several alarm signals on the engine whistle. Apparently, the occupants of the motor-car did not hear the whistle signal as they made no effort to remove the car from the tracks or to jump from the car. When the engine reached a point about 200 feet west of the motor-car the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of No. 16 was about 25 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The movements of track motor-cars are authorized orally by the train dispatcher, and a written line-up of the movement of trains within a limited territory is given the operator of a track motor-car. Train crews are not given information about line-ups issued to motor-car operators. The rules governing the operation of track motor-cars provide that motor-cars must clear the time of scheduled trains, and no movement may be made on the time of such trains without proper flag protection or written authority from the train dispatcher. Operators of motor-cars are required to communicate with the train dispatcher at each open office to obtain information as to the location of trains, and to maintain a lookout to the front and rear of moving motor-cars. In this case, the maximum authorized speed for the motor-car was 20 miles per hour, and for the following train 75 miles per hour. Since the motor-car was insulated to prevent actuation of automatic-block signals, the only provision for preventing the motor-car from being overtaken when being operated on the time of a following scheduled train was the spacing that would result from the use of burning fuses. The operator of the motor-car involved had been examined on the rules about 9 years prior to the accident, and on the day prior to the accident he was reexamined. At the time of the accident the motor-car was equipped with the required flagging signals. The copy of the line-up which the foreman gave to the signalman and a copy of the current timetable were found in the vicinity of the point where the accident occurred. The signalman had a standard watch on his person. Since the operator of the motor-car was killed in the accident, it could not be determined what understanding he had of the rules, nor why he permitted the motor-car to occupy the main track on the time of No. 16.

In connection with the investigation of this accident, information was obtained concerning five other collisions between trains and motor-cars on the Marion Division of the Erie Railroad since January 1, 1945. During the past two years the Commission has investigated eight such collisions on other railroads. These accidents resulted in the death of 20 persons and the injury of 19, and were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. In

the instant case, the members of the crew of the following train were not informed by signal indication or by train order as to the presence of the preceding motor-car, and no protection was furnished for the motor-car. Since automatic block signals do not furnish protection for insulated motor-cars, equivalent protection should be provided. The book of operating rules of this carrier contains manual-block rules for the blocking of trains, but these rules were not in effect in the territory where the accident occurred. If the motor-car had been given block-signal protection the following passenger train would not have been permitted to enter an occupied block. If adequate train-order protection had been provided for the movement of the motor-car this accident might have been prevented.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Erie Railroad Company provide adequate train-order or block-signal protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-second day of April, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.