

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2643
THE GRAND TRUNK WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT DURAND, MICH., ON
OCTOBER 30, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad: Grand Trunk Western
Date: October 30, 1942
Location: Durand, Mich.
Kind of accident: Collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Cut of cars
Train number: 22
Engine number: 5627
Consist: 5 cars : 8 cars
Speed: 25-30 m. p. h. : Standing
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Single; tangent; 0.26 percent
descending grade eastward
Weather: Cloudy
Time: About 5:42 a. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 25 injured
Cause: Accident caused by a cut of cars
standing on the main track with-
out protection on the time of a
first-class train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2643

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

THE GRAND TRUNK WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

December 14, 1942.

Accident at Durand, Mich., on October 30, 1942, caused by
a cut of cars standing on the main track without pro-
tection on the time of a first-class train.

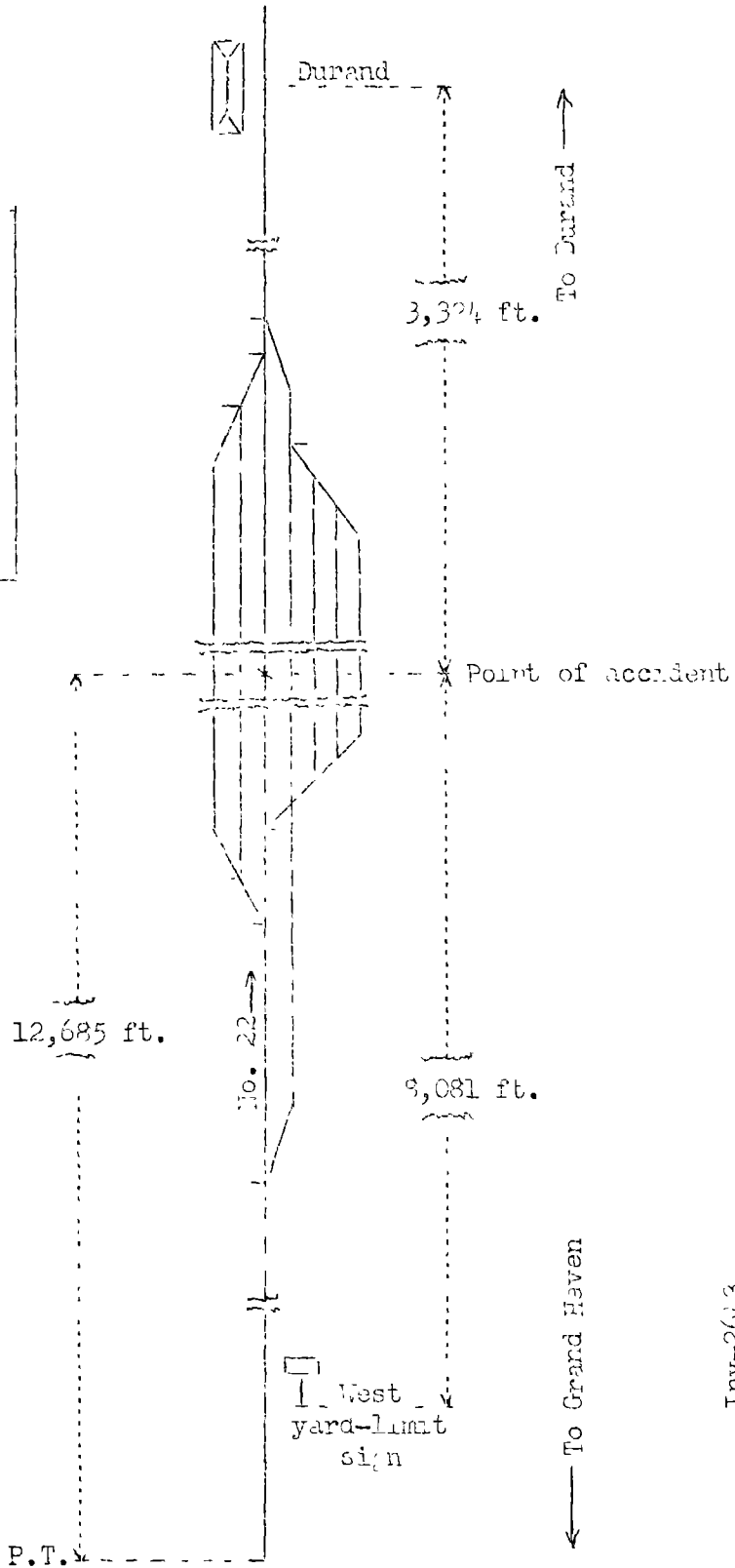
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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 30, 1942, there was a collision between a passenger train and a cut of cars on the Grand Trunk Western Railroad at Durand, Mich., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 20 passengers, 2 railway-mail clerks, 1 Pullman employee and 2 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Michigan Public Service Commission.

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

- o Durand, Mich. 0.63 mi.
- Y Point of accident 2.55 mi.
- o Vernon 3.37 mi.
- o Owosso 31.20 mi.
- o Grand Rapids 28.58 mi.
- o Grand Haven, Mich.



Inv-2643
 Grand Trunk Western Railroad
 Durand, Mich.
 October 30, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Detroit Division designated as the Grand Rapids Subdivision and extending between Grand Haven and Durand, Mich., a distance of 121.33 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Between points 7,084 and 1,152 feet west of the station at Durand, classification yards parallel the main track on each side. The accident occurred on the main track within yard limits at a point 3,324 feet west of the station and 8,081 feet east of the west yard-limit sign. A yard office is located south of the main track at a point about 3,500 feet west of the point of accident. Approaching from the west the track is tangent a distance of 2.4 miles to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. At the point of accident the grade for east-bound trains is 0.26 percent descending.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing first and second class trains * * *, and without protecting against other trains.

* * *

By night, or in foggy or stormy weather, proper lights must be placed on cars or engines obstructing the main track within yard limits.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

About 2:45 a. m. a cut of 36 freight cars was left standing on the main track within yard limits at Durand. Between that time and about 3:40 a. m., yard engine 8318 removed 25 cars from the west end of the cut and yard engine 8372 removed 3 cars from the east end. This left 8 cars remaining on the main track. About 2 hours later the cut of 8 cars was struck by No. 22.

No. 22, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 5627, one mail car, one baggage-express car, two coaches and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order

named. The first and the fifth cars were of steel construction and the remainder were of steel-underframe construction. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Muskegon, 127.29 miles west of Durand, at 11 p. m., October 29, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, on time, departed from Owosso, 11.55 miles west of Durand and the last open office, at 5:28 a. m., 3 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 to 30 miles per hour it struck the cut of freight cars. The air brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route.

As a result of the impact the west car of the cut of cars was destroyed, and the west truck of the second westward car was derailed. Two cars on an adjacent track were struck by the derailed cars of the main-track cut and one truck of each car was derailed. Engine 5627 stopped upright on the roadbed with its front end 166 feet beyond the point of collision. All wheels except the left No. 1 engine-truck wheel and the right trailer-truck wheel were derailed. The front end of the engine was badly damaged. The first and the fourth cars of No. 22 were slightly damaged.

It was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:42 a. m.

The train-service employee killed was the engineer, and the train-service employees injured were the fireman and the baggageman.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 11.4 trains.

After the accident inspection of engine 5627 disclosed that the throttle was closed, the reverse lever was in position for 25 percent cut-off in forward motion, the automatic brake valve was in emergency position, the independent brake valve was in lap position, and the automatic-brake-valve emergency-sanding feature had functioned.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that within yard limits the main track may be used protecting against first-class and second-class trains. On the line involved in this accident there are no second-class trains.

No. 22, a first-class schedule, was due to leave Vernon, 3.18 miles west of Durand and the last station where time is shown, at 5:35 a. m. About 2:45 a. m., a cut of 36 cars was left standing on the main track within yard limits at Durand. About 3:30 a. m. yard engine 8318 hauled 25 cars from the west end of this cut to the classification yard and about 3:40 a. m. yard engine 8372 hauled 3 cars from the east end to the classification yard. Eight cars remained unprotected on the main track and, about 5:42 a. m., these cars were struck by No. 22.

As No. 22 was approaching Durand the speed was about 55 miles per hour, the throttle was open, the headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Brake-pipe pressure of 90 pounds was being maintained. According to the statement of the fireman, when his train was about 2,000 feet west of the point where the accident occurred the engineer placed the brake valve in emergency position. The fireman said that soon afterward he was able to see at a distance of about 1,200 feet the cut of cars on the main track. The speed was reduced to about 25 miles per hour at the time of the collision. Since the engineer was killed in the accident it could not be determined when he first observed the cars.

According to the statement of the yardmaster, he first instructed the foreman of yard engine 8318 to switch cars from the west end of the 36 cars and the yard foreman of yard engine 8372 to switch cars from the east end until the switching was completed. Later, he discovered that the consist of the cut of cars was not in accordance with the actual relative positions of the cars; therefore, he instructed the foreman of yard engine 8372 to switch out 3 cars from the east end and the foreman of yard engine 8318 to switch the remainder to the classification yard. At that time the yardmaster and the foreman of engine 8318 were in the vicinity of the twenty-fifth westward car. According to the statement of the foreman of engine 8318, he understood that the yardmaster instructed him to leave all eastward cars on the main track. Because no switching list had been issued and some of the cars were route-carded and others designated by chalk marks, he was not certain as to the number of cars to be switched by his crew. A member of his crew informed him that the proper number of cars had been uncoupled, and the foreman assumed the yardmaster had performed that service. Later, he learned that one of his switchmen had uncoupled the cars. The foreman was not concerned about the cars remaining on the main track as he understood the yardmaster would dispose of them. About 5 a. m. the yardmaster and the foreman talked by telephone and the foreman reported that he had disposed of the cars which his engine had removed

from the main track, but did not inform the yardmaster that cars remained on the main track. The switchman who uncoupled the cars said that, because of chalk markings on the twenty-sixth westward car, he understood that the uncoupling should be made at that point. According to the foreman of engine 8372, he was instructed to switch 3 most easterly cars from the cut and the remainder would be disposed of by another crew. About 5:40 a. m. a switchtender called the yardmaster by telephone and inquired if any cars were on the main track obstructing the passage of No. 22. The yardmaster lighted a fusee and proceeded to the main track to flag No. 22; however, it had passed his location.

The trainmaster said that, under the rules, the main track at Durand should have been clear at 5:25 a. m., or 10 minutes before No. 22 was due to leave Vernon, the last station west of Durand. If a proper switching list had been issued to the crew of engine 8318, or if the yardmaster and the foreman of engine 8318 had had a proper understanding, this accident could have been prevented.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a cut of cars standing on the main track without protection on the time of a first-class train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourteenth day of December, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.