

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3722
THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT GRAND RAPIDS, MINN., ON
AUGUST 17, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad: Great Northern
Date: August 17, 1943
Location: Grand Rapids, Minn.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Freight
Train numbers: 35 : Extra 2109 West
Engine numbers: 5402 : 2109
Consist: 4 cars : 77 cars, caboose
Speed: 8 m. p. h. : 20 n. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard limits
Track: Single; 1° curve; practically level
Weather: Clear
Time: 1:15 a. m.
Casualties: 20 injured
Cause: Failure properly to control
speed of following train
moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2722

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

THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

September 20, 1943.

Accident at Grand Rapids, Minn., on August 17, 1943, caused
by failure properly to control speed of following
train moving within yard limits.

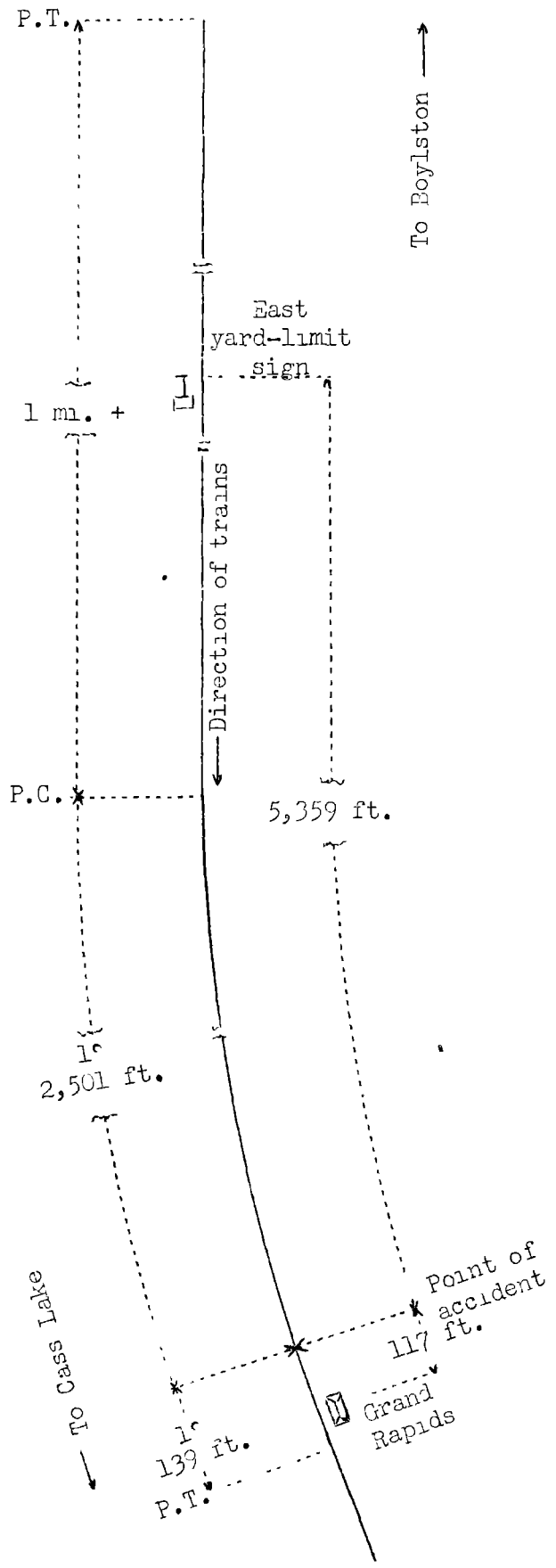
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 17, 1943, there was a rear-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Great Northern Railway at Grand Rapids, Minn., which resulted in the injury of 15 passengers, 3 persons carried under contract and 2 train-service employees.

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 Boylston, Wis. 93.01 mi.
- o Gunn, Minn. 3.05 mi.
- X Grand Rapids (Point of Accident) 53.35 mi.
- o Cass Lake, Minn.



Inv. No. 2722
 Great Northern Railway
 Grand Rapids, Minn.
 August 17, 1933

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Mesabi Division designated as the Third Subdivision and extending between Boylston, Wis., and Cass Lake, Minn., 149.41 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line, within yard limits, over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 117 feet east of the station at Grand Rapids and 5,359 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. From the east the track was tangent more than 1 mile, then there was a 1° curve to the left 2,501 feet to the point of accident and 139 feet beyond. At the point of accident the grade was practically level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

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

93. * * *

Within yard limits the main track may be used without protecting against second and inferior class, extra trains and engines.

Second and inferior class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at restricted speed.

* * *

Description of Accident

No. 35, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric engine 5402, one baggage car, one mail-baggage car, one coach and one Government conservation car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train passed Gunn, 3.05 miles east of Grand Rapids and the last open office east of Grand Rapids, at 12:50 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 13 minutes late, and stopped at Grand Rapids at 12:55 a. m. About 20 minutes later, after this train had moved about 35 feet westward, it was struck by Extra 2109 West at a point 5,359 feet west of the east yard-limit sign.

Extra 2109 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 2109, 46 loaded and 31 empty cars and a caboose,

passed Gunn at 1:10 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed the east yard-limit sign at Grand Rapids, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck No. 35.

The rear two cars of No. 35 were considerably damaged. The front end of engine 2109 was badly damaged. The sixteenth to twenty-sixth cars, inclusive, of Extra 2109 were demolished.

From the left side of a west-bound engine the view of the point where the accident occurred was restricted to about 1,000 feet, and from the right side to about 325 feet, because of buildings adjacent to the track and track curvature.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 1:15 a. m.

The fireman of Extra 2109 and a student engineer on the engine of No. 35 were injured.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier governing operation within yard limits provide that all trains except first-class trains must be operated prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction.

No. 35 stopped at the station at Grand Rapids at 12:55 a. m. About 20 minutes later, after this train had started and moved westward about 35 feet, the rear end was struck by Extra 2109 West. Under the rules the speed of Extra 2109 was required to be so controlled that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.

The members of the train crew of No. 35 were engaged in handling mail, baggage and express at the station when they observed the following train approaching. The conductor ran toward the approaching train and was giving stop signals with a lighted white lantern when the engine of Extra 2109 passed him. The engineer of No. 35 had started the train forward in an unsuccessful attempt to avert the collision.

As Extra 2109 was approaching the east yard-limit sign the speed was about 25 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The air brakes had been tested and had functioned properly. There was no condition of the engine which obscured vision or distracted attention of the employes who were on the engine.

When the engine reached the vicinity of the east yard-limit sign, the engineer placed the throttle in drifting position. From this point westward the view of the track ahead was materially restricted because of buildings adjacent to the track and track curvature. When the engine reached a point about 350 feet east of the point where the accident occurred the employees on the engine saw the red marker lights of the preceding train and a member of the crew of that train giving stop signals. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but he was unable to stop his train short of No. 35. The speed of Extra 2109 was about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twentieth day of September, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.