INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2585

THE HUNTINGDON AND BROAD TOP MOUNTAIN
RAILROAD AND COAL COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR HUMMEL, PA., ON

MAY 5, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Railroad and Coal Company	
Date:	May 5, 1942	
Location:	Hummel, Pa.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Passenger
Train numbers:	Extra 33 North	: Passenger Extra M-39 South
Engine numbers:	33	: M-39
Consist:	40 cars, caboose	: Gas-electric motor car
Speed:	10-25 m. p. h.	: 35-40 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; 0.31 percent ascending grade northward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	About 6:50 p. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 6 injured	
Cause:	Accident caused by failure to obey meet order	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2585

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

THE HUNTINGDON AND BROAD TOP MOUNTAIN
RAILROAD AND COAL COMPANY

June 19, 1942.

Accident near Hummel, Pa., on May 5, 1942, caused by failure to obey meet order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 5, 1942, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the line of the Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Railroad and Coal Company near Hummel, Pa., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of two passengers and four employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

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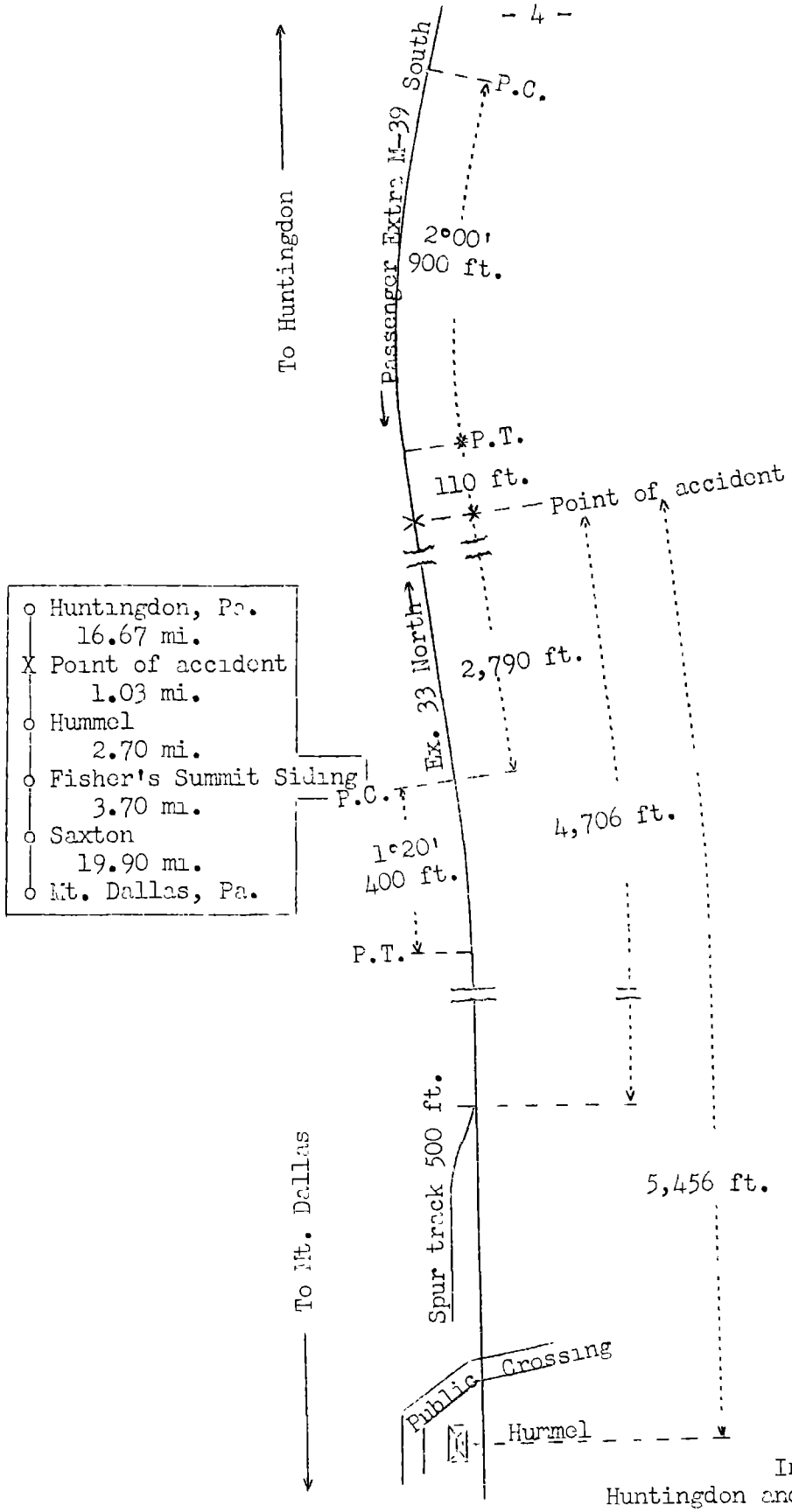
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv-2585
Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain
Railroad and Coal Company
Hummel, Pa.
May 5, 1942.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad which extends between Mt. Dallas and Huntingdon, Pa., a distance of 44 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. At Hummel a spur track about 500 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. Entry to this track is made at a point 750 feet north of the station through a facing-point switch for south-bound movements. The accident occurred at a point 4,706 feet north of this switch. As the point of accident is approached from the south there are, in succession, a tangent 3,200 feet in length, a 1°20' curve to the left 400 feet, and a tangent 2,790 feet to the point of accident and 110 feet beyond. As the point of accident is approached from the north there is a 2° curve to the left 900 feet in length, which is followed by the tangent on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 0.31 percent ascending northward.

The southern end of the curve immediately north of the point of accident is laid in a cut. The walls of this cut rise to a maximum height of 13 feet and there are trees on top of each wall.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

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

* * *

(n) __ __ o Approaching meeting or waiting points. See Rule 90.

* * *

38. * * *

At meeting points between extra trains, the train in the inferior time-table direction must take the siding unless otherwise provided.

* * *

90. * * *

Train must stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on the siding.

* * *

The engineman of each train will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point. Should the engineman fail to give signal 14 (n) as herein prescribed, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

210. When a "31" train order has been transmitted, * * *

Those to whom the order is addressed, except enginemen, must read it to the operator and then sign it, * * *. The copy for each engineman must be delivered to him personally by the conductor; the engineman will then read the order to the conductor before proceeding.

Enginemen must show train orders to firemen and when practicable to forward trainmen. Conductors must show train orders when practicable to trainmen.

Time-table instructions read in part as follows:

Northward Trains are superior by direction to Trains of the same class in opposite Direction, unless otherwise specified.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger extras is 45 miles per hour, and for local freight extras, 35 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 33 North, a north-bound local freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 33, 32 loaded and 8 empty cars and a caboose. At Saxton, 6.4 miles south of Hummel, the crew received copies of train order No. 19, Form 31, which read as follows:

Extra 33 North Meet
Pasgr Extra M 39
South at Hummel

Extra 33 North departed from Saxton at 6:05 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains. At Fisher's Summit Siding, 2.7 miles south of Hummel, cars were added to the train, and a running air-brake test was made as the train

departed. This train passed the fouling point of the spur track at Hummel, where it was required to wait unless Passenger Extra M-39 South was into clear, and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 to 25 miles per hour it collided with Passenger Extra M-39 South at a point 4,706 feet north of the switch of the spur track.

Passenger Extra M-39 South, a south-bound passenger train, consisted of gas-electric motor car M-39. The gas-electric motor car was of steel construction. It was 75 feet 1/2 inch in length, and was divided into an engine compartment, a baggage compartment, a smoking compartment and a passenger compartment. At Huntingdon, 17.7 miles north of Hummel, the crew received copies of train order No. 19, Form 31, previously quoted. This train departed from Huntingdon at 6:30 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, and while moving at a speed estimated as 35 to 40 miles per hour it collided with Extra 33 North. The air brakes functioned properly en route.

Because of the cut and the track curvature north of the point of accident the view from the control compartment of a south-bound motor car is considerably restricted.

The force of the impact moved the gas-electric motor car backward 235 feet. The front end was crushed inward a distance of 5 feet, and the car was otherwise badly damaged. Engine 33 and its tender were derailed but remained upright and stopped, badly damaged, with the front end of the engine telescoping gas-electric motor car M-39. The tender was somewhat damaged. The first four cars were derailed to the right and were slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:50 p. m.

The employee killed was the conductor of Passenger Extra M-39, and the employees injured were the engineer of Passenger Extra M-39 and the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 33.

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 5.6 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that at a meeting point between two extra trains, the train in the superior time-table direction must stop clear of

the switch to be used by the train going into clear. The engineer of each train must sound the meeting-point whistle signal at least 1 mile in advance of the meeting point. If an engineer fails to sound the proper signal, the conductor must take action to stop the train. When practicable, all members of a crew must read train orders. All surviving members of both crews understood these requirements.

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 19, which established Hummel as a meeting point between Extra 33 North, a freight train, and Passenger Extra M-39 South. Since Passenger Extra M-39 was moving in the inferior time-table direction, it was required to enter the spur track at Hummel to clear for Extra 33, and Extra 33 was required to stop on the main track short of the fouling point of the spur-track switch unless Passenger Extra M-39 was into clear.

The crew of Passenger Extra M-39 consisted of two employees. As this train was approaching Hummel, the speed was about 40 miles per hour and the engineer was stationed in the control compartment maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer was not aware of anything being wrong until his motor car reached a point in the cut about 900 feet north of the point where the accident occurred, and then he observed smoke north of the switch at Hummel. Immediately afterward he saw Extra 33 and applied the brakes in emergency, but the distance was not sufficient for the accident to be averted. The brake on the motor car had functioned properly en route.

After the conductor of Extra 33 North signed train order No. 19, Form 31, in the dispatcher's office at Saxton, he received two copies of the order, and then delivered one copy to the engineer and the other copy to the fireman. He did not retain a copy for the flagman and himself. The conductor said that before his train departed from Saxton, because of performing switching service, he failed to inform either the front brakeman or the flagman concerning the meeting point with Passenger Extra M-39 at Hummel. According to the statement of the engineer of Extra 33, he read train order No. 19 before his train departed from Saxton but afterward he forgot the meeting point. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 25 miles per hour, and the front brakeman and he were maintaining a lookout ahead. The fireman was tending the fire. The first that the engineer was aware of anything being wrong was when he observed Passenger Extra M-39 approaching at a distance of about 1/4 mile. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position but the distance was not sufficient for stopping short of the approaching train. The engineer estimated that the speed of his train was about 10 miles per hour at the time of the collision. According to the statement of the conductor, when his

train passed Hummel he was in the caboose engaged in clerical duties and failed to observe if Passenger Extra M-39 was into clear at Hummel, or if his train was being operated prepared to stop short of the fouling point of the switch. When his train had passed a considerable distance beyond Hummel, he became aware that his train had not complied with the provisions of train order No. 19, but before he could take action to stop the train the collision occurred. The rules require that the meeting-point whistle signal be sounded not less than 1 mile in advance of a meeting point. In this instance the engineer of Extra 33 did not sound the whistle signal. If the conductor had observed the failure to sound the meeting-point signal he could have taken action to stop the train. Although the fireman had a copy of the train order in his possession, he forgot the meeting point.

The investigation of this accident disclosed that the handling of train orders did not comply with the requirements of the rules. The dispatcher read train order No. 19 to the conductor, who signed the order but did not read it to the dispatcher. The conductor then read the order to the engineer and delivered a copy to him, but the engineer did not read it to the conductor. The conductor delivered the second copy of the order to the fireman, but neither one discussed it or read it to the other. The conductor did not inform the flagman of the provision of the meet order and neither of the enginemen informed the front brakeman that Extra 33 and Passenger Extra M-39 were to meet at Hummel. The conductor said that it is customary for him to deliver both copies of a train order to the engine crew and that he depends upon them to fulfill the requirements of the order. No member of the crew had been on duty more than 1 hour 5 minutes when the accident occurred. If the flagman and the front brakeman had read the order involved, it is probable they would have remembered about the meeting point, as they were not occupied with any duties when their train passed Hummel.

The carrier's rules for the testing of train air-brake equipment provide that terminal tests of the air-brake system must be made at originating terminals. In addition, when cars, added to a train subsequent to a terminal test, are in the position in which they are to be hauled in the train, an air-brake test must be made and each brake must be examined to determine if it applies and releases properly. Three members of the crew of Extra 33 said that a proper test was made at Saxton, the initial terminal, but two members were not certain if a proper test was made at that point. At Fisher's Summit Siding 25 cars were added to the train. The engineer said the only test at that point was made by the use of the automatic brake valve to control the train moving from the siding. There was no evidence that the brakes did not function properly

between Fisher's Summit Siding and the point of accident; nevertheless, Extra 33 left this station without the crew knowing the actual condition of the brakes of their train.

The trainmaster said that employees had been instructed to comply with the rules, but, since he also fulfilled the duties of dispatcher, he was not able to observe if employees complied with the rules. The manner in which the employees of Extra 33 performed their duties indicates a lack of proper supervision. The investigation disclosed the need for additional protection for the movement of trains on this line. If an adequate block system had been in use, this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this nineteenth day of June, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.