

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2687  
THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL SYSTEM  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT 63rd STREET STATION,  
CHICAGO, ILL., ON  
MARCH 27, 1943

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Illinois Central  
Date: March 27, 1943  
Location: 63rd Street Station, Chicago, Ill.  
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision  
Trains involved: Passenger : Passenger  
Train numbers: 2 : 8  
Engine numbers: 2449 : 2434  
Consist: 18 cars : 11 cars  
Speed: Standing : 8-12 m. p. h.  
Operation: Automatic block-signal system  
Track: Eight tracks; tangent; 0.08 per-  
cent descending grade northward  
Weather: Clear  
Time: About 9:10 p. m.  
Casualties: 145 injured  
Cause: Accident caused by failure properly  
to enforce flagging rule, and by  
failure to operate following train  
in accordance with signal indication

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2687

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

THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL SYSTEM

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May 7, 1943.

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Accident at 63rd Street Station, Chicago, Ill., on March 27, 1943, caused by failure properly to enforce flagging rule, and by failure to operate following train in accordance with signal indication.

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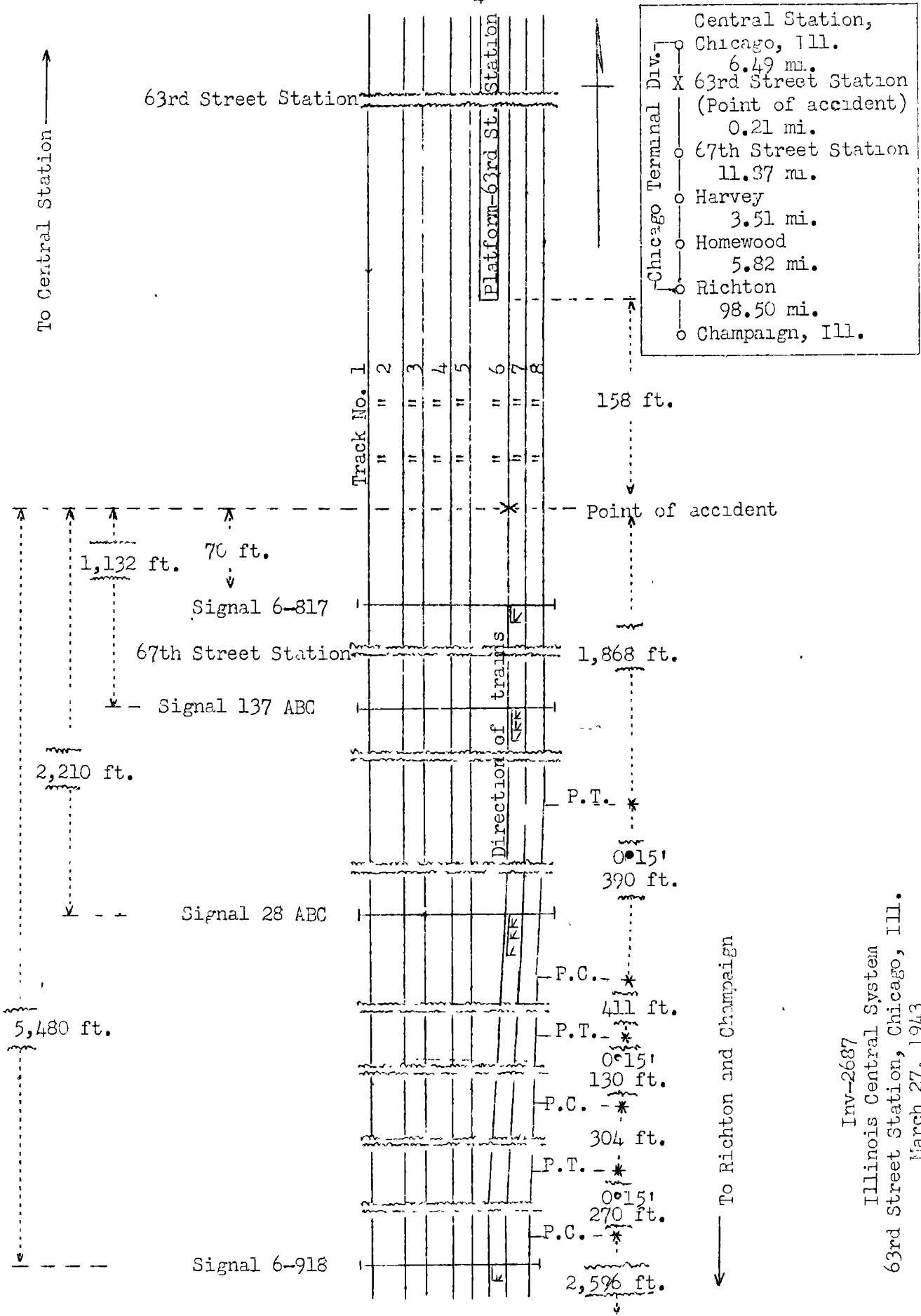
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 27, 1943, there was a rear-end collision between two passenger trains on the line of the Illinois Central System at 63rd Street Station, Chicago, Ill., which resulted in the injury of 132 passengers, 7 dining-car employees, 1 club-car attendant, 3 train porters, 1 Pullman porter and 1 train-service employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

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<sup>1</sup>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-2687  
 Illinois Central System  
 63rd Street Station, Chicago, Ill.  
 March 27, 1943

To Richton and Champaign

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Chicago Terminal Division extending between Richton and Central Station, Chicago, Ill., 27.9 miles. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident this is an 8-track line. The main tracks from west to east are numbered consecutively 1 to 8. The accident occurred on track No. 6, designated as the northward through-passenger track, at a point 158 feet south of the platform at 63rd Street Station. Trains moving with the current of traffic on track No. 6 are operated by an automatic block-signal system, the indications of which supersede time-table superiority. Approaching from the south on track No. 6, there are, in succession, a tangent 2,596 feet in length, a 0°15' curve to the right 270 feet, a tangent 304 feet, a 0°15' curve to the right 130 feet, a tangent 411 feet, a 0°15' curve to the left 390 feet, and a tangent 1,868 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. The grade for north-bound trains is 0.08 percent descending at the point of accident.

Automatic signal 6-918, semi-automatic signals 28 ABC and 137 ABC at 67th Street interlocking, and automatic signal 6-817, which govern north-bound movements on track No. 6, are mounted on signal bridges located, respectively, 5,480, 2,210, 1,132 and 70 feet south of the point of accident. These signals are of the color-light type, and are continuously lighted. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals are as follows:

Signal 6-918

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
Yellow, flashing	Proceed preparing to stop at second signal.	Advance approach.

Home signals 28 ABC and 137 ABC

Yellow-over-red-over-red	Proceed; preparing to stop at next signal. Train exceeding medium speed must at once reduce to that speed.	Approach.
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Signal 6-817

Red, above number plate	Stop; then proceed at restricted speed.	Stop and proceed. See Rule 509 (a).
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Operating rules read in part as follows:

55. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

\* \* \*

Night Signals--A red light,  
Torpedoes and  
Fuses.

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fuses.  
\* \* \*

\* \* \*

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fuses must be thrown off at proper intervals.

\* \* \*

#### BLOCK SIGNAL AND INTERLOCKING RULES.

##### DEFINITIONS

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Medium Speed.--A speed not exceeding thirty miles per hour.

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or switch not properly lined and to look out for broken rail.

251. On portions of the railroad, and on designated tracks so specified on the time-table, trains will run with reference to other trains in the same direction by block signals whose indications will supersede the superiority of trains.

509 (a). \* \* \* trains may pass Stop and Proceed signals without stopping, proceeding from such signal to the next signal indicating proceed, at restricted speed not exceeding fifteen miles per hour.

607. In automatic block signal territory, where automatic block signals are used in conjunction with interlocking signals, such signals will govern the use of the blocks as well as the use of the routes through the interlocking, and automatic block signal rules, in addition to interlocking rules, are in effect.

General Regulations read in part as follows:

917. \* \* \* . At stops of usual duration and under normal conditions, a passenger train flagman, unless specifically required to assist in handling passengers, should stand about thirty feet behind the train, \* \* \* .

Time-table Special Instructions provide that Rule 251 is in effect in the territory where the accident occurred.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains moving on track No. 6 is 70 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 2, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 2449, one baggage car, one mail-baggage car, one baggage car, six coaches, one chair car, two coaches, one chair car, two coaches, one dining car, one club car and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Champaign, 119.91 miles south of 63rd Street Station, at 6:16 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 10 minutes late, passed the tower at 67th Street, 1,140 feet south of 63rd Street Station and the last open office, at 9:05 p. m., and stopped at 63rd Street Station about 9:07 p. m., according to the statements of the crew, with its rear end standing 70 feet north of signal 6-817. About 3 minutes later the rear end was struck by No. 8.

No. 8, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 2434, one baggage-dormitory car, two coaches, three Pullman sleeping cars, one dining car, three Pullman sleeping cars and one observation car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Champaign at 7:10 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 5 minutes late. Soon after it departed from Champaign, a running test of the brakes was made and the brakes functioned properly at all points where used en route. No. 8 passed signal 6-918, which displayed advance-approach, passed signals 28 ABC and 137 ABC, which displayed approach, passed the tower at 67th Street at 9:09 p. m., passed signal 6-817, which displayed stop-and-proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 8 to 12 miles per hour it collided with No. 2.

There was no condition of the engine of No. 8 that distracted the attention or obscured the vision of the enginemen.

The force of the impact moved No. 2 northward about 25 feet. The front coupler of the first car and the rear coupler of the seventh car were broken. The rear vestibule of the

eighteenth car was telescoped. The front end of engine 2434 was considerably damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:10 p. m.

The train-service employee injured was the baggageman of No. 2.

#### Data

According to the timetable, No. 2 was due to leave 63rd Street at 9:10 p. m.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that when a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train the flagman must take necessary action to insure full protection. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection; however, under the general regulations, the flagman of a passenger train making a regular stop is instructed to stand about 30 feet to the rear of his train unless he is required to assist in the handling of passengers. Under the rules governing operation in automatic block-signal territory, a train may pass a signal displaying stop-and-proceed without stopping, but is required to be operated so that it can be stopped short of a train or an obstruction. All the employees involved understood these requirements.

No. 2, a first-class train, was due to leave 63rd Street Station, a regular stop, at 9:10 p. m. This train stopped at 63rd Street about 9:07 p. m., with the rear end standing 70 feet north of signal 6-817. About 9:10 p. m. the rear end was struck by No. 8.

When No. 8 was about 1.15 miles south of the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 65 miles per hour, the throttle was open, the headlight was lighted and the engineer were maintaining a lookout ahead. Brake-pipe pressure of 90 pounds was being maintained. The engineer observed from a distance of about 800 feet that signal 6-918 was displaying advance-approach, and he made a brake-pipe reduction of 7 pounds. As soon as the brake-pipe exhaust ceased he made a further reduction of 8 pounds. This brake application reduced the speed to about 30 miles per hour and, when the engine was a short distance north of signal 6-918, the engineer released the brakes and partially closed the throttle. When the engine was about 1,200 feet south of the point of accident he made another 7-pound brake-pipe reduction, which was not released, and the speed was reduced to about 20 miles per hour as the engine passed signal 137 ABC. When the engine was about 350 feet south



of signal 6-817, the enginemen observed simultaneously the lighted markers of No. 2 showing red to the rear, and a fusee which had just become ignited. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position and closed the throttle, but he could not stop his train short of No. 2. The speed was from 8 to 12 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The first the members of the train crew knew of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

The flagman of No. 2 said that when his train stopped at 63rd Street Station he stationed himself about 30 feet to the rear of the train. He maintained a lookout along the platform so that when his train was ready to proceed he could board it without being recalled by the sounding of the engine whistle, as the unnecessary use of the engine whistle is prohibited within the corporate limits of Chicago. About 9:10 p. m. he was informed by a train porter that all passengers were unloaded and as he was about to give a lantern signal to proceed he glanced southward and saw No. 8 about 1,000 feet distant. He had some difficulty in lighting a fusee but after it was lighted he proceeded toward the approaching train and gave flagging signals, which were acknowledged. The flagman understood the requirements of the flagging rule and when the speed of his train was being reduced to make regular stops at three points south of 63rd Street he dropped off lighted red fusees to provide protection, but when the speed was being reduced to make the stop at 63rd Street he did not drop off a lighted fusee because he depended upon two interlocking home signals and an automatic block signal to the rear of his train to provide protection. Nevertheless, automatic block-signal rules do not dispense with the observance of operating rules. The conductor of No. 2 said that it is customary for a flagman to stand near the rear of his train at 63rd Street Station and, if circumstances require, to display a lighted fusee. The flagman said that when a train is standing, a lighted fusee is used only in an emergency. The engineer of No. 8 said that if a lighted fusee had been displayed to the rear of No. 2 a short period before the flagman lighted the one in question, he would have controlled the speed of No. 8 accordingly, and the accident would not have occurred. The flagman had about 3 minutes in which to provide protection, but he did not go more than 30 feet to the rear because a provision of the general regulations concerning the duties of passenger-train flagmen did not require him to proceed to the rear more than 30 feet. The modification of the flagging rule resulting from the provision in the general regulations to the effect that at regular stops a passenger-train flagman will take a position 30 feet to the rear of his train, unless his services are required in the handling of passengers, practically nullifies the application of this rule at these locations. If the flagging rule had not been modified, the flagman would have been required to proceed

to the rear immediately after his train stopped and, under the conditions existing in that vicinity, if he had proceeded at an average gait in the time at his disposal he could have furnished sufficient protection to prevent the accident. The investigation disclosed that block-signal indications are relied upon to a considerable extent as a substitute for the flagging rule.

In the territory involved, trains are operated with the current of traffic on track No. 6 by automatic block signals, the indications of which supersede time-table superiority. No. 2 was due to leave 63rd Street Station at 9:10 p. m. and the accident occurred at that time; however, under the rules, No. 8 was not required to be operated in accordance to the schedule times of other trains but was required to be operated in accordance with signal indications. The engineer said that he controlled the speed of his train in accordance with the indications displayed by signals 6-918, 28 ABC and 187 ABC, but failed to comply with the indication of signal 6-817, which displayed stop-and-proceed. Under the rules, a train is not required to stop before it proceeds beyond a signal displaying stop-and-proceed, but is required to be operated in such manner that it can be stopped short of a preceding train. Considering the fact that the rear end of No. 2 stood only 70 feet beyond the last signal passed by the engine of No. 8, if No. 8 had been required to stop before it proceeded beyond a stop-and-proceed indication and if its speed had been controlled properly after it passed the signal, this accident would have been prevented. The conditions disclosed by this investigation direct attention to the need for proper enforcement of the operating rules.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to enforce the flagging rule, and by failure to operate the following train in accordance with signal indication.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of May, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.