

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3849

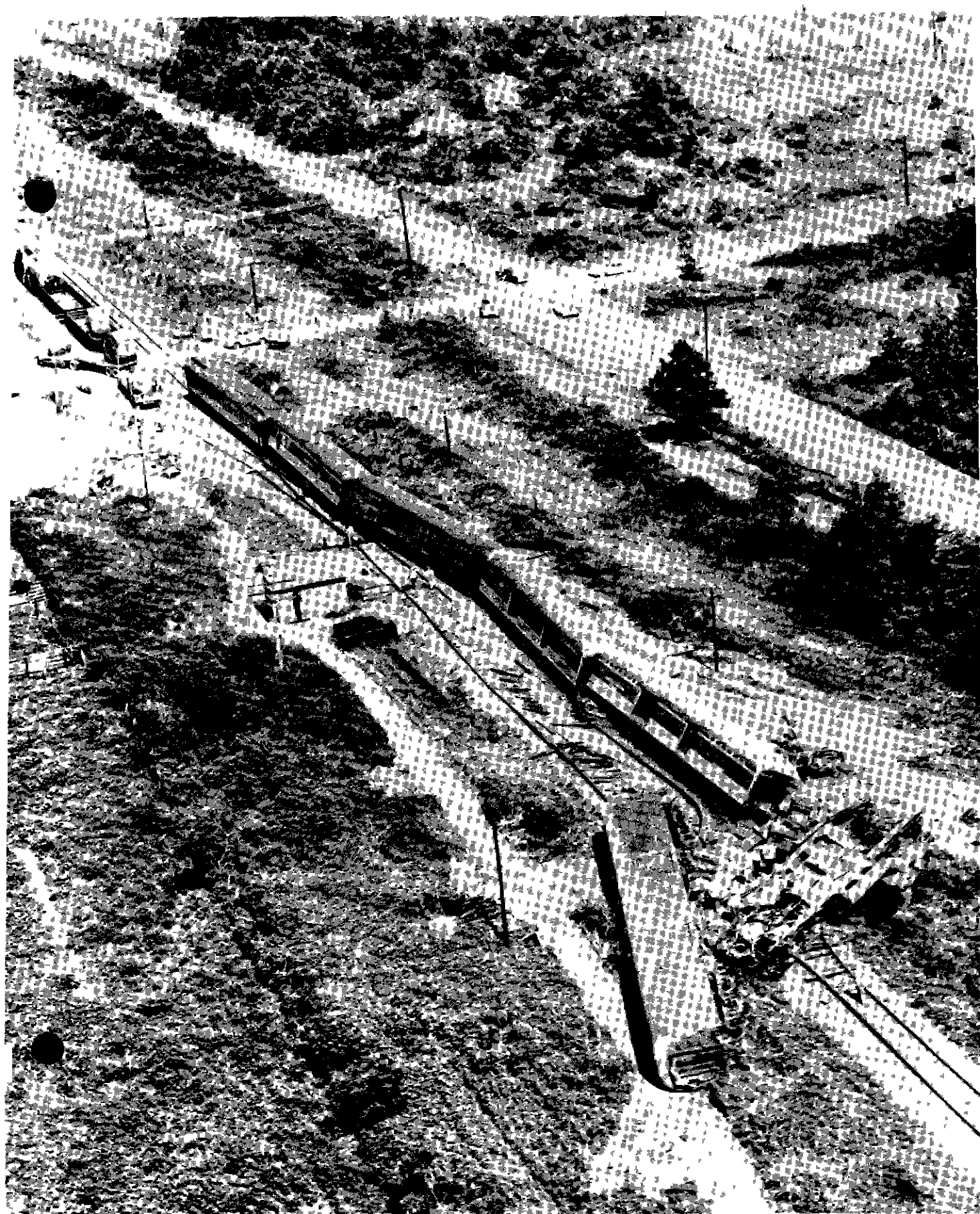
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

BODCAU, LA

JUNE 30, 1959

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington



SUMMARY

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DATE.	June 30, 1959	
RAILROAD	Illinois Central	
LOCATION	Bodcau, La	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Passenger train	Motortruck
TRAIN NUMBER	205	
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER	Diesel-electric unit 8801	
CONSIST	6 cars	
SPEEDS	55 - 60 m p h.	Undetermined
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders	
TRACK	Single, tangent, level	
HIGHWAY	Tangent, crosses track at angle of 88°41', level	
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	12 30 p m	
CASUALTIES	1 killed, 6 injured	
CAUSE	Motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3849

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

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

September 25, 1959

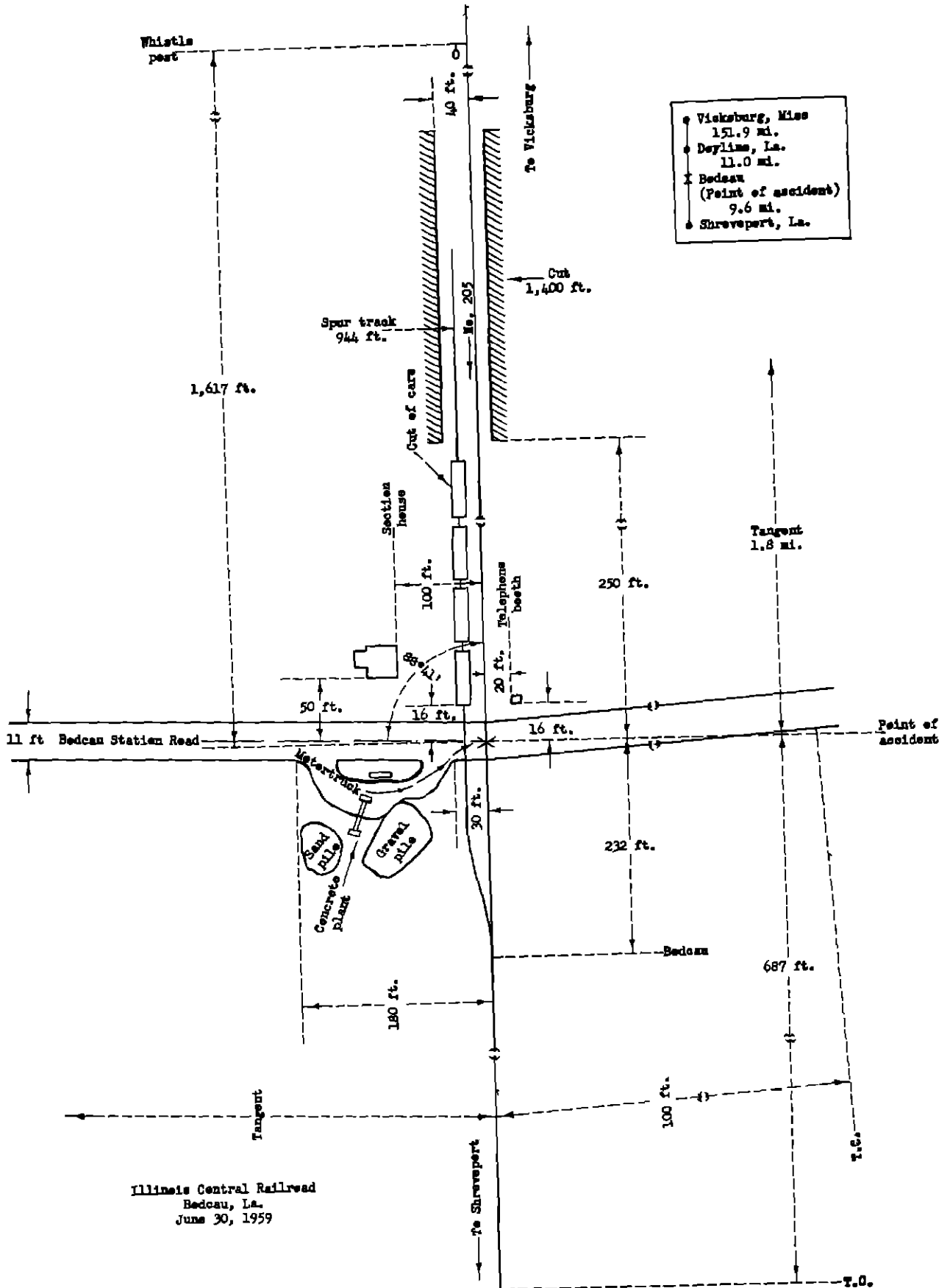
Accident at Bodcau, La , on June 30, 1959, caused by a motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

FREAS, Commissioner

On June 30, 1959, at Bodcau, La , there was a collision between a motortruck and a passenger train on the Illinois Central Railroad at a rail-highway grade crossing, which resulted in the death of the driver of the motortruck, and the injury of 1 passenger, 2 train-service employees, 1 railway-mail clerk, 1 railway-express messenger, and 1 mail handler

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



- Vicksburg, Miss 151.9 mi.
- Doyline, La. 11.0 mi.
- Bedcau (Point of accident) 9.6 mi.
- Shreveport, La.

Illinois Central Railroad
 Bedcau, La.
 June 30, 1959

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Vicksburg Division extending between Vicksburg, Miss., and Shreveport, La., 172.5 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 Bodcau, La., 9.6 miles east of Shreveport, a spur track 944 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The switch of the spur track is trailing-point for westbound movements and is located at the station point.

The accident occurred on the main track 232 feet east of the Bodcau station point, where the tracks are crossed at grade by a private road designated as Bodcau Station Road. From the east, the main track is tangent 1.8 miles to the point of accident and 687 feet westward. The grade is practically level in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident.

Bodcau Station Road is about 11 feet in width in the vicinity of the crossing and is surfaced with gravel. It intersects the tracks at an angle of $88^{\circ}41'$, and the crossing is surfaced with slag to the tops of the rails. The road is tangent throughout a considerable distance north of the crossing and is practically tangent throughout a distance of about 100 feet south of the crossing.

In the vicinity of the crossing, the track is laid in a cut extending about 1,400 feet eastward from a point 250 feet east of the center of the crossing. The north bank of the cut is about 40 feet north of the main track and it rises to a height of about 7 feet at a point approximately 900 feet east of the crossing. A section house is located in the northeast angle of the intersection, about 50 feet east of Bodcau Station road and 100 feet north of the main track. At the time of the accident, there was a cut of 4 gondola cars standing on the spur track, and the west end of this cut of cars was 16 feet east of the center of the crossing. When closely approaching the crossing from the north, a motorist's view of the main track east of the crossing is considerably restricted by the north bank of the cut and the section house. On the day of the accident, the motorist's view was further obstructed by the cut of cars standing on the spur track.

A concrete plant is located in the northwest angle of the intersection and is provided with a driveway. The north and south ends of the driveway connect with Bodcau Station Road at points, respectively, about 180 feet and 30 feet north of the center of the crossing. A railroad telephone booth is in the southeast angle of the intersection about 16 feet from the centerline of Bodcau Station Road and 20 feet south of the main track.

A crossing watchman, who is an employee of the concrete plant, is on duty at the crossing between 7:00 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. The crossing is not protected by highway railroad-crossing signs. A crossing-whistle sign for westbound trains is located 1,617 feet east of the crossing.

This carrier's 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 * * *

SOUND	INDICATION
(1) — — o —	Approaching public crossings at grade To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is reached
17	The headlight must be displayed to the front of trains by day and night * * *
30	* * * the engine bell must be rung * * * while approaching and passing public crossings at grade, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 59 miles per hour

Description of Accident

No 205, a westbound first-class passenger train, consisted of road-switcher type diesel-electric unit 8801, 1 baggage car, 3 baggage-express cars, 1 mail-baggage car, and 1 coach, in the order named. The cars were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Vicksburg at 7 58 a m, 8 minutes late, departed from Doyline, La, 151.9 miles west of Vicksburg, at 12 15 p m, 11 minutes late, and about 15 minutes later, while moving at a speed of 55 to 60 miles per hour, it struck a motortruck at a point 232 feet east of the station point at Bodcau, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Bodcau Station Road.

The motortruck was an International owned by Braswell Industries Inc, Shreveport, La. It was provided with a 6-cubic yard capacity concrete mixer permanently mounted on the frame, and was powered by a 6-cylinder engine. It was equipped with a conventional cab, dual wheels on tandem rear axles, air brakes, and bore Louisiana license No 479-402. At the time of the accident it was loaded with five cubic yards of concrete. The total weight of the motortruck and the lading was 41,050 pounds. The driver, who was the sole occupant of the vehicle, held Louisiana chauffeur license No 2052415. The motortruck was loaded at the concrete plant and was en route to a housing project located a short distance south of the crossing, when it entered the crossing at an undetermined speed and was struck by No 205.

No 205 stopped with the front end about 465 feet west of the point of accident. The locomotive and the 1st to 6th cars, inclusive, were derailed. The locomotive stopped on its left side, across the main track structure, and with the front end about 30 feet south of the main track. A separation occurred at each end of the 1st car. The derailed cars stopped in various positions as shown in PLATE 1. The locomotive and the 1st car were heavily damaged, the 2nd to the 5th cars, inclusive, were considerably damaged, and the 6th car was slightly damaged.

The motortruck was demolished. Parts of it were found under the derailed equipment and in various locations on both sides of the main track west of the crossing.

The engineer and the fireman of No 205 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12 30 p m.

During the 30-day period immediately preceding the day of the accident, the average daily railroad movement over the crossing was 7.1 trains. During the 13-hour period beginning at 6 00 a m, July 8, 1957, a total of 317 motor vehicles passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No 205 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was 55 to 60 miles per hour. The enginemen were in the control compartment at the east end of the locomotive, and the members of the train crew were in the sixth car. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly.

The engineer said that as the train was approaching the crossing-whistle sign located 1,617 feet east of the crossing, he began to sound the grade-crossing signal on the locomotive horn, and that he prolonged this signal until the accident occurred. The fireman said that he began to sound the locomotive bell as the train closely approached the crossing-whistle sign, and that the bell remained in continuous operation until the time of the accident. The engineer said that about the same time he began sounding the locomotive horn, he observed a southbound motortruck about to enter Bodcau Station Road from the driveway leading to the concrete plant. He said that he then saw the motortruck enter the private road and proceed slowly southward toward the crossing. He said that his view of the motortruck was then obstructed by the gondola cars standing on the spur track, and that when he next observed the motortruck it was moving onto the crossing immediately in front of the train. The fireman, whose view of Bodcau Station Road north of the crossing was obstructed by the front of the locomotive, said that as the train was closely approaching the crossing, he observed the crossing watchman hurriedly arise from a sitting position at the telephone booth located near the crossing and attempt to warn the driver of the motortruck. The fireman said that when the locomotive was about 100 feet east of the crossing, he observed the motortruck entering the crossing, and that at this time the engineer applied the brakes of the train in emergency. The speed of the train was not materially reduced before the collision occurred.

The crossing watchman said that he first saw the motortruck approaching the crossing about the same time he heard the crossing-whistle signal being sounded by the engineer of No 205. He said that he immediately gave stop signals by hand, and shouted warnings, to the driver of the motortruck, but the motortruck continued to move slowly onto the crossing and was struck by No 205.

Inasmuch as the driver of the motortruck was killed in the accident, it could not be determined why he failed to stop the motortruck short of the crossing. The driver had been employed as a heavy truck operator since 1948. He had operated a motortruck over the crossing several times, and was aware that a crossing watchman was provided to give warning of approaching trains.

The investigation disclosed that from points 88 feet, 73 feet and 41 feet north of the centerline of the main track, the driver of a southbound vehicle on the concrete plant driveway may see a westbound train at distances of about 880 feet, 1230 feet and 525 feet, respectively, east of the crossing.

Examination of the track structure after the accident occurred disclosed that the locomotive derailed to the south at a point immediately west of the crossing, apparently as a result of parts of the motortruck having become wedged under the front of the locomotive.

Cause

This accident was caused by a motortruck being driven onto a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D C , this twenty-fifth
day of September, 1959

By the Commission, Commissioner Freas

(SEAL)

HAROLD D McCOY,
Secretary