

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3507
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR CHARLES CITY, ICWA, ON
MARCH 14, 1953

SUMMARY

Date: March 14, 1953

Railroad: Illinois Central

Location: Charles City, Iowa

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train

Train number: : Extra 1504 East

Engine number: : 1504

Consist: : 10 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: Undetermined : 40 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.55 percent
ascending grade westward

Weather: Raining

Time: 9:45 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
for movement of track motor-car

Recommendation: That the Illinois Central Railroad
Company provide adequate protection
for movement of track motor-cars on
its line

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3507

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

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

April 6, 1953

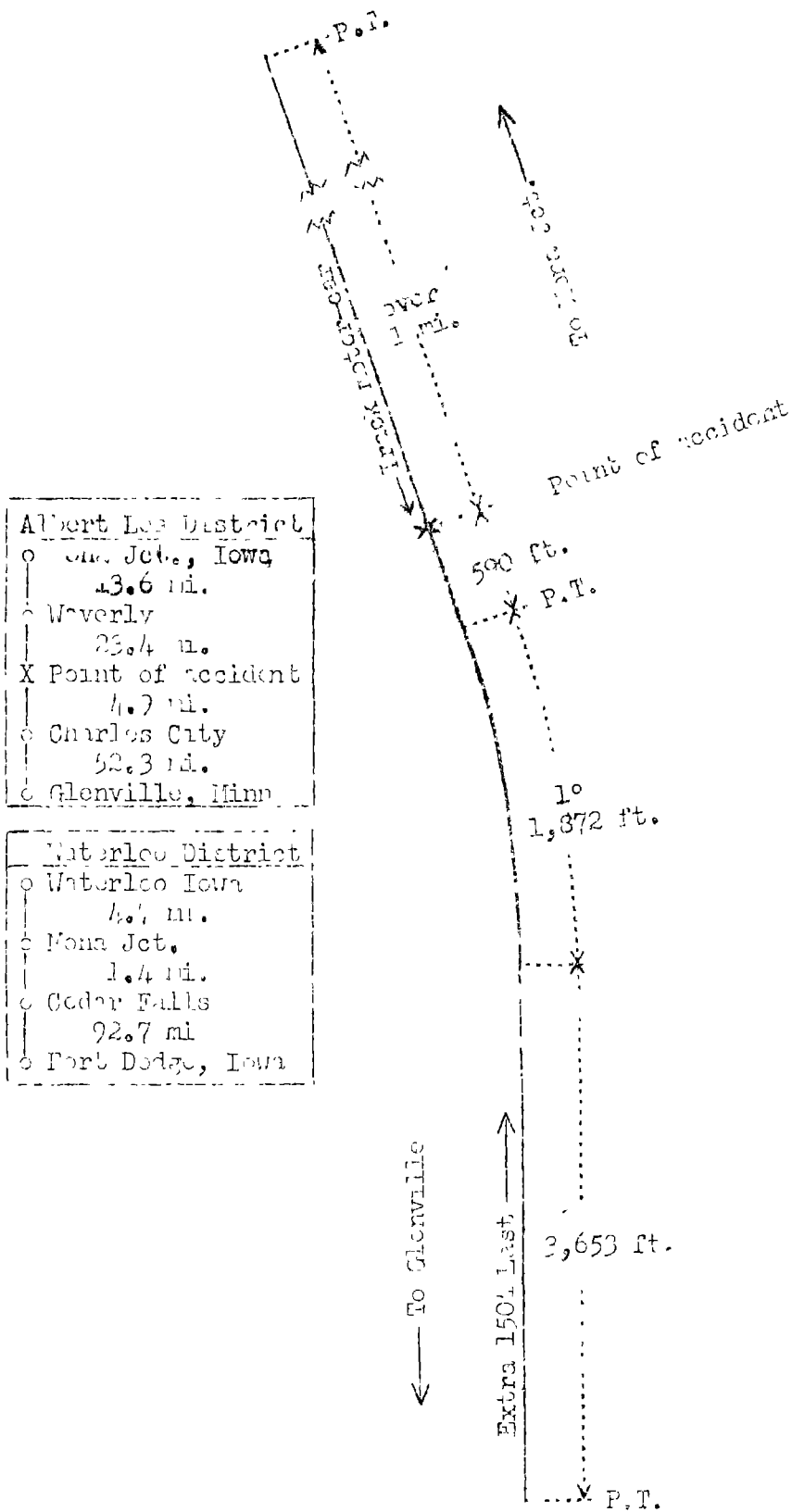
Accident near Charles City, Iowa, on March 14, 1953, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 14, 1953, there was a head-end collision
between a track motor-car and a freight train on the
Illinois Central Railroad near Charles City, Iowa, which
resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee.

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



Report No. 3507
 Illinois Central Railroad
 Charles City, Iowa
 March 11, 1955

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Iowa Division designated as the Albert Lea District and extending between Mona Jet., Iowa, and Glenville, Minn., 94.2 miles. This is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Mona Jet. the Albert Lea District connects with the Waterloo District, which extends between Waterloo and Fort Dodge, Iowa. Mona Jet. is located 4.7 miles west of Waterloo. The accident occurred on the main track of the Albert Lea District at a point 37 miles west of Mona Jet. and 4.9 miles east of Charles City, Iowa. The track is tangent throughout a distance of more than 1 mile immediately east of the point of accident and 520 feet westward. From the west there are, in succession, a tangent 3,653 feet in length, a 1° curve to the left 1,872 feet, and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.55 percent ascending westward at the point of accident.

This carrier's rules for the maintenance-of-way and structures read in part as follows:

MOTOR, PUSH AND VELOCIPEDA CARS

96. Keep Familiar with Train Movements.--The employe in charge of the operation of a motor car must keep in touch with the movement of trains, securing, if possible, the necessary information from the dispatcher.

97. Train Information.--Before going to work, and as often as necessary thereafter, foremen and other operators of track cars, shall secure information on movements of trains. * * *

99. Caution in Use of Track Cars.--Track cars shall move at all times with safety, expecting trains or other cars to appear at any time from either direction without notice. When necessary to operate them in * * * severe storms * * * or where the view is obstructed in any way, * * * special care must be used * * *

Supplementary rules and instructions governing the use and operation of track cars read in part as follows:

* * *

Line-up will be given by train dispatcher as provided in these rules. Morning line-up will be issued at a definite time and will expire at time stated in line-up. Additional line-up will be issued as conditions may require.

* * *

When practicable, track cars should not be placed or moved on main tracks unless the track car operator has a current line-up.

* * *

Line-up will be given by train dispatcher over the signature of chief train dispatcher in a prescribed form for stated period for his territory. He must retain copy of line-up given.

* * *

Train dispatcher should take necessary action to see that no train operates in advance of time shown on line-up (or timetable schedule) unless such train is notified by train order or otherwise to be on lookout for track cars and to use whistle freely.

In furnishing line-up, engine number should be given when possible and, when known by dispatcher, information should be included which will advise track car operators when certain trains may be expected to run faster than usual, due to light engine, light tonnage, special equipment, or for other reasons.

* * *

The maximum authorized speeds are 40 miles per hour for freight trains and 20 miles per hour for light inspection track motor-cars.

Description of Accident

A track motor-car occupied by a track inspector departed east-bound from Cedar Falls, a station on the Waterloo District 1.4 miles west of Mona Jct., between 7:15 a. m. and 8 a. m. It entered the Albert Lea District at Mona Jct. At 9:45 a. m., while it was moving westward at an undetermined speed, it collided with Extra 1504 East at a point 37 miles west of Mona Jct. and 4.9 miles east of Charles City.

Extra 1504 East, an east-bound freight train consisting of engine 1504, 4 cars, and a caboose, departed from Albert Lea, 6.8 miles west of Glenville, at 7:30 a. m. Cars were added to the train at several points. This train departed from Charles City at 9:34 a. m. with 10 cars and a caboose, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it collided with the track motor-car.

The track motor-car became wedged between the coupler and the pilot of the engine. It was demolished. Extra 1504 East stopped with the front of the engine 1,382 feet east of the point of accident. The front of the engine was slightly damaged.

The track inspector, who was on the track motor-car, was killed.

Rain was falling and the temperature was about 32 degrees above zero at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9:45 a. m.

The track motor-car was powered by a one-cylinder, five to eight horsepower gasoline motor and was equipped with four-wheel brakes. It weighed 610 pounds, exclusive of the cab, and had seating capacity for four persons. It was equipped with an enclosed plywood cab 4.8 feet in height. There were two windows at the front of the cab, each 20 inches in length and 12 inches in height. The window at the left was equipped with a hand-operated wiper. On the day of the accident the cab was heated by a small kerosene stove.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 3.93 trains.

Discussion

On this line the train dispatcher customarily transmits a line-up to the operator at Cedar Falls each morning for the use of operators of track motor-cars originating at Cedar Falls. On the day of the accident this line-up, which was transmitted at 7:02 a. m., read in part as follows:

* * *

No. 591 Eng 1225 called at Waterloo 7 AM

* * *

Local Extra 1504 East called ALea 730AM

AC-2 Extra 147 East be called ALea 930AM

Expires 1001 AM

No. 591 is a local freight train which operates via the Albert Lea District. The line-up also included several trains which operate via the Waterloo District. When the operator at Cedar Falls went off duty, at 7:15 a. m., he placed the track inspector's copy of the line-up in a box outside the office. The agent reported for duty at 8 a. m. When he reached the office the line-up had been removed from the box. Neither of these employees saw the track inspector on the day of the accident. The agent at Waverly, 13.6 miles west of Mona Jct., reported for duty at 8:35 a. m. He said that he did not notice the track motor-car pass after he reached the office. On Saturday there is no open office between Waverly and the point of accident. A telephone which can be used for communication with the train dispatcher is located at each siding between Cedar Falls and the point of accident. The train dispatcher said that the track inspector did not communicate with him on the day of the accident. After the accident occurred it was found that the track inspector had in his possession a copy of the line-up which had been received by the operator at Cedar Falls.

As Extra 1504 East was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly. The enginemen and the front brakeman were on the engine, and the conductor, the swing brakeman, the flagman, and a student brakeman were in the caboose. The crew had received no information that the track ahead was occupied by a track motor-car. The employees on the engine said that a heavy rain was falling and their range of vision was restricted to a distance of 1/2 to 3/4 mile. The

windows of the cab were clouded by rain and steam, and these employees were maintaining a lookout ahead through the clear-vision windows at the front of the cab. The grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded for a rail-highway grade crossing 3,657 feet west of the point of accident. The engine bell was ringing. As the engine was closely approaching the tangent on which the accident occurred the fireman and the front brakeman observed the headlight of the track motor-car. They called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately closed the throttle, made an emergency application of the brakes, and sounded a warning whistle signal. The fireman and the front brakeman said that the track motor-car appeared to be moving westward but they were unable to estimate its speed. They did not see the occupant of the track motor-car. They thought that the speed of the train had been slightly reduced when the collision occurred. Because of smoke trailing along the side of the engine, the engineer did not see the track motor-car before the accident occurred.

The rules of this carrier require the operator of a track motor-car to procure information regarding train movements, when practicable, before operating his track motor-car on a main track. They also require the train dispatcher to take necessary action to insure that no train operates in advance of the time shown on a line-up unless the crew of the train is notified that the operators of track motor-cars are not expecting the movement. However, the line-up received by the operator of the track motor-car in this accident indicated only the locations of trains at the time the line-up was issued. The crew of Extra 1504 East said that on the day of the accident their train consumed less time than usual between Albert Lea and the point of accident. The train was not restricted by the issuance of the line-up, and the crew was not informed that the track motor-car was occupying the main track. With this line-up the responsibility for computing the running time of the train and judging the approximate arriving times at stations and other points was placed on the operator of the track motor-car. This method of operation does not provide adequate protection for the movements of track motor-cars.

Since January 1, 1944, the Commission has investigated 42 collisions, including the present case, which were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. These accidents resulted in the death of 78 persons and the injury of 131 persons. In the reports covering

the investigations of these accidents, the Commission repeatedly has recommended that the carrier involved take measures to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Illinois Central Railroad Company provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this sixth day of April, 1953.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Acting Secretary.