

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3030
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR MORTON, MISS., ON
OCTOBER 15, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Illinois Central
Date: October 15, 1946
Location: Morton, Miss.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Freight
Train numbers: Passenger Extra : 271
1268 East
Engine numbers: 1268 : 2105
Consists: 5 cars : 58 cars, 2 cabooses
Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 25 m. p. h.
(backward motion)
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; practically level
Weather: Clear
Time: 6:25 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 4 injured
Cause: Failure to obey right-of-track order

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3030

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

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

November 12, 1946

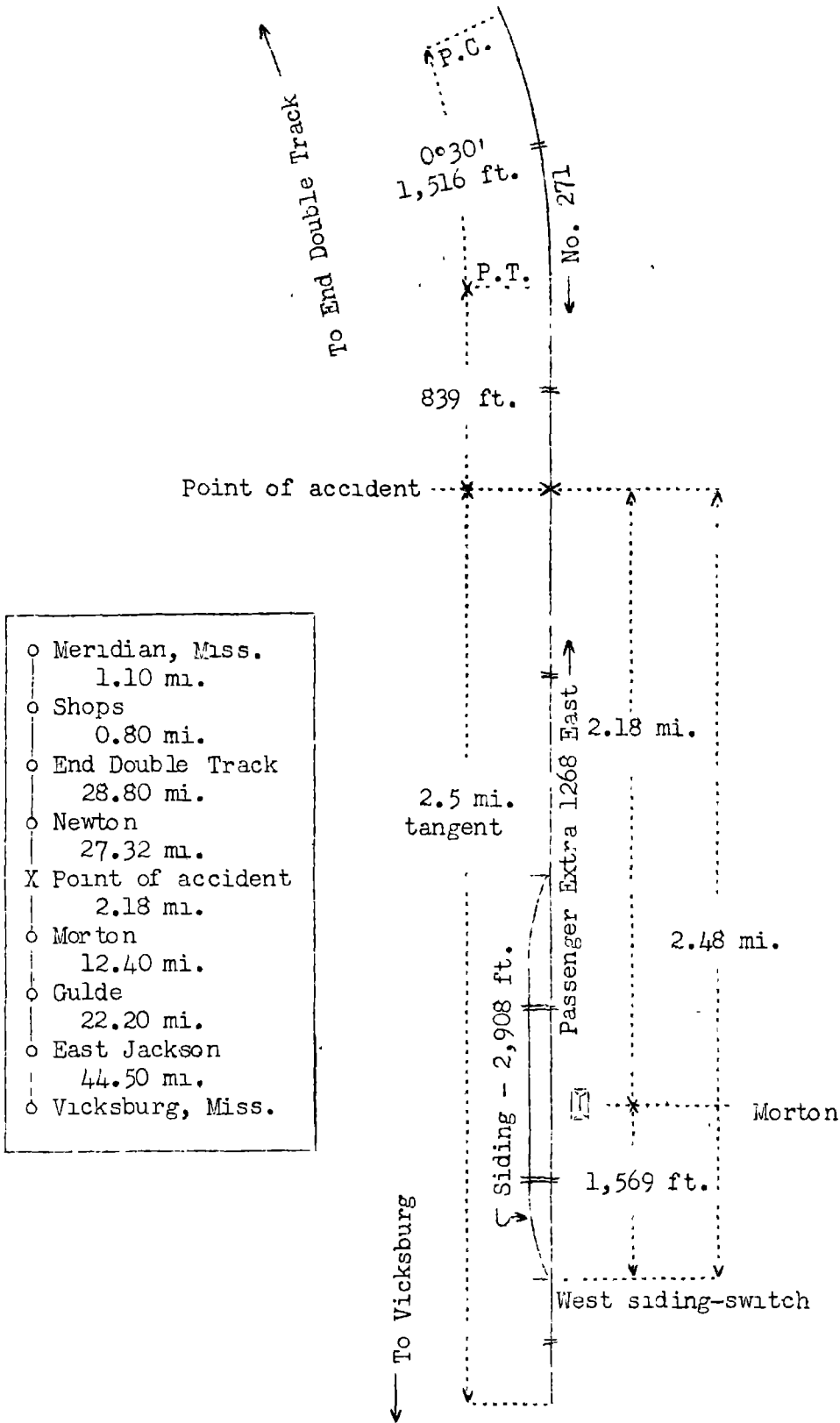
Accident near Morton, Miss., on October 15, 1946, caused
by failure to obey a right-of-track order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 15, 1946, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Illinois Central Railroad near Morton, Miss., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of two passengers and two 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.



Inv. No. 3030
 Illinois Central Railroad
 Morton, Miss.
 October 15, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Vicksburg Division extending between Vicksburg and End Double Track, near Meridian, Miss., 137.4 miles, a single-track line. In the vicinity of the point of accident trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Morton, 79.1 miles east of Vicksburg, a siding 2,908 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The west switch of this siding is 1,569 feet west of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 2.48 miles east of the west siding-switch. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 2.5 miles immediately west of the point of accident and 839 feet eastward. From the east there is a 0°30' curve to the right 1,518 feet in length, which is followed by the tangent on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is practically level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

5. * * *

The time applies at the switch where an opposing train clears; * * *

* * *

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

Right is superior to class or direction.

* * *

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

204. * * *

* * *

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

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

S-C.

Giving Right Over an Opposing Train.

* * *

(2) Extra 37 east has right over No 3 F to A.

* * *

These orders give right to the train first named over the other train between the points named. If the trains meet at either of the designated points, the first-named train must take the siding, unless the order otherwise prescribes.

In this territory the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 60 miles per hour and for freight trains, 40 miles per hour. Train-order instructions restricted the speed of the passenger train involved to 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Vicksburg the crew of Passenger Extra 1268 East, an east-bound passenger train, received copies of train order No. 46 reading in part as follows:

ENG 1268 RUN PASGR EXTRA VICKSBURG
TO MERIDIAN HAS RIGHT OVER * * *
NO 271 ENG 2105 VICKSBURG TO
MORTON * * *

Passenger Extra 1268 East consisted of engine 1268, one tourist sleeping car, one troop kitchen car, two tourist sleeping cars and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train passed East Jackson, the last open office, 34.6 miles west of Morton, at 5:23 p. m., passed the west siding-switch at Morton, where it was required to enter the siding and remain clear of the main track until No. 271 had been met, and stopped about 6:23 p. m. on the main track at a point about 2.5 miles east of the west siding-switch. About 2 minutes later, while this train was moving in backward motion at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour, it was struck by No. 271.

At Shops, 0.8 mile east of End Double Track, the crew of No. 271, a west-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 46. This train, consisting of engine 2105, 58 cars and 2 cabooses, passed Newton, the last open office, 29.5 miles east of Morton, at 4:42 p. m., 4 hours 34 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with Passenger Extra 1268 East.

The rear truck of the tender of the engine of each train, and the first six cars of No. 271 were derailed. The first two cars of No. 271 and both engines were badly damaged. The first and third cars of Passenger Extra 1268 East and the third and fourth cars of No. 271 were slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:25 p. m.

The engineer of No. 271 was fatally injured. The conductor of Passenger Extra 1268 East and the fireman of No. 271 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 10.52 trains.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 46, which gave Passenger Extra 1268 East right over No. 271, a west-bound second-class train, between Vicksburg and Morton. Under the rules, the time of No. 271 at Morton applied at the west switch of the siding at that station, and this train was due to leave the west siding-switch at Morton at 1:25 p. m. No train order had been issued authorizing Passenger Extra 1268 East to proceed on the main track east of the west siding-switch at Morton unless No. 271 had been met. Passenger Extra 1268 East passed the west siding-switch at Morton about 6:20 p. m., stopped on the main track at a point about 2.5 miles east of this switch and had moved a short distance westward in backward motion when it was struck by No. 271.

As No. 271 was approaching the point where the collision occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer was fatally injured in the accident. The fireman and the front brakeman said that the first they knew of anything being wrong was when they saw the reflection of the headlight of

the opposing train about 1,500 feet distant, and the engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of No. 271 was about 25 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The crew of Passenger Extra 1268 East received copies of train order No. 46 at Vicksburg, 79.1 miles west of Morton, about 5 hours 20 minutes prior to the time the accident occurred. At that time each member of the crew read the train order. The engineer and the front brakeman understood that, under the provisions of this train order, their train was required to enter the siding at Morton at the west switch and to remain clear of the main track at that station until No. 271 had been met. The conductor, the flagman and the fireman said that they misread the order and, until after the collision occurred, they thought the order gave their train right over No. 271 between Vicksburg and End Double Track, near Meridian. They did not again read the order. As Passenger Extra 1268 East was approaching Morton the conductor and the flagman were in the rear car and the front brakeman was in the first car. The front brakeman said that, because there was no reduction in the speed of the train as it was approaching the west siding-switch at Morton, he thought the other members of the crew had received a train order at some station west of Morton authorizing Passenger Extra 1268 East to proceed east of Morton to meet No. 271. He was proceeding toward the rear car to confer with the conductor when the collision occurred. The engineer said that after his train passed Guide, 12.4 miles west of Morton, and until it was about 2.5 miles east of Morton, he forgot that his train was required to enter the siding at Morton. Then he saw the reflection of the headlight of the approaching train, and took action to stop his train and then to move it westward in backward motion. The fireman immediately lighted a red fusee and, when his train stopped, ran toward the approaching train. Passenger Extra 1268 East was moving westward at a speed of about 5 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Trains are operated on this line by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously.

No recommendation is made here concerning additional protection for the operation of trains at the maximum authorized speed disclosed in this investigation, because there is now pending before the Commission docket No. 29543, which is an investigation instituted May 20, 1946, on its own motion, to determine whether it is necessary, in the public interest, to require any common carrier by railroad to install

block signal system, interlocking, automatic train stop, train control and/or cab signal devices, and/or other similar appliances, methods and systems intended to promote the safety of railroad operation, upon the whole or any part of its railroad on which any train is operated at a speed of 50 or more miles per hour.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a right-of-track order.

Dated at Washington, D. C. this twelfth day of November, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

SEAL

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.