

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2625
THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL SYSTEM
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT SIOUX FALLS, S. DAK., ON
SEPTEMBER 3, 1942

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SUMMARY

Railroad: Illinois Central

Date: September 3, 1942

Location: Sioux Falls, S. Dak.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: 791 : 776

Engine numbers: 759 : 996

Consist: 3 cars, caboose : 7 cars, caboose

Speed: 15 m. p. h. : Standing

Operation: Timetable and train orders;
accident occurred within
yard limits

Track: Single; 3⁰ curve; 1 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 4:46 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure properly
to control speed of No. 791 within
yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2625

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

THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL SYSTEM

November 7, 1942.

Accident at Sioux Falls, S. Dak., on September 3, 1942,
caused by failure properly to control speed of No.
791 within yard limits.

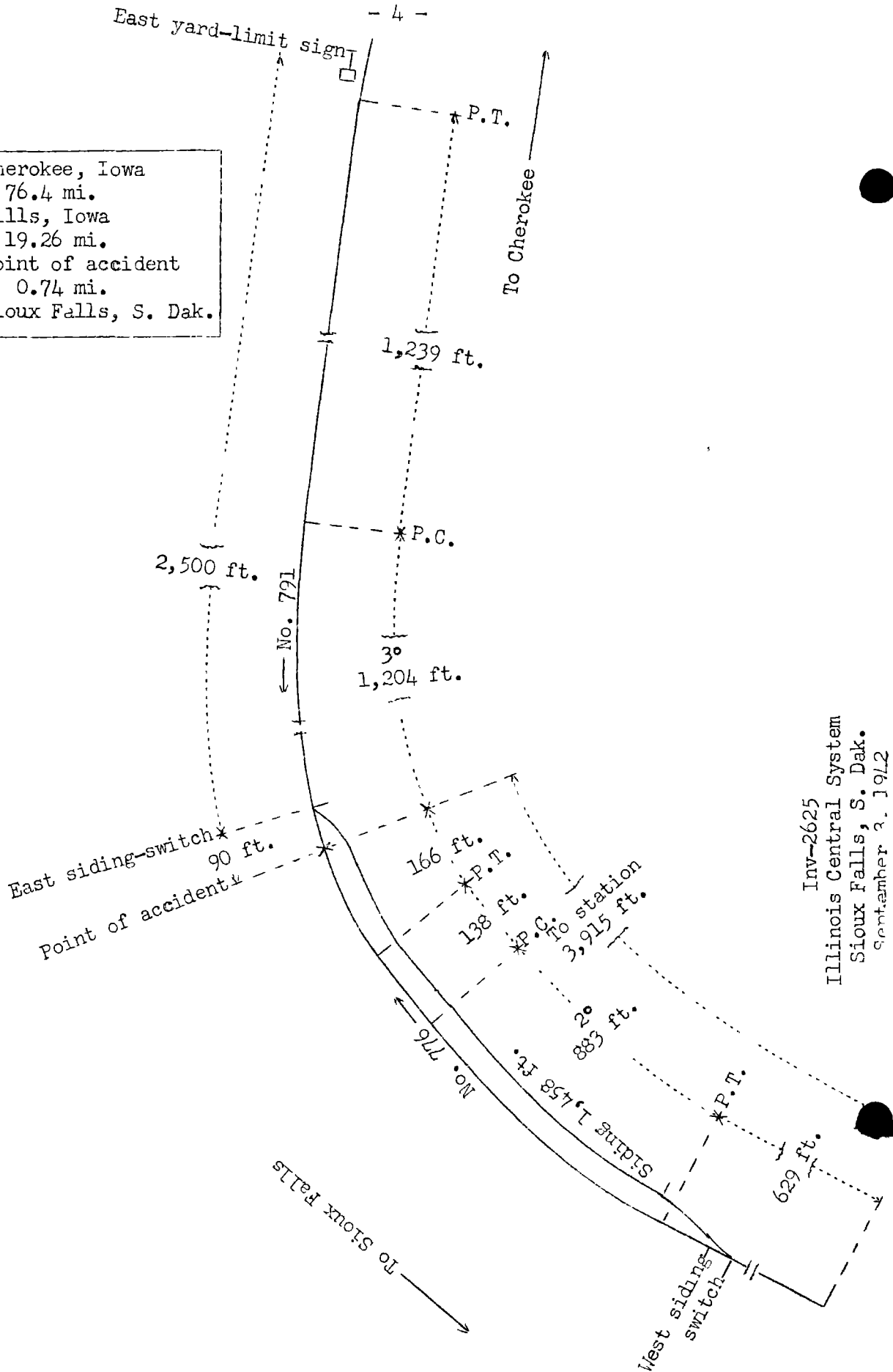
¹
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 3, 1942, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the line of the Illinois Central System at Sioux Falls, S. Dak., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

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.

- Cherokee, Iowa
76.4 mi.
- Hills, Iowa
19.26 mi.
- X Point of accident
0.74 mi.
- Sioux Falls, S. Dak.



Inv-2625
Illinois Central System
Sioux Falls, S. Dak.
September 2, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Iowa Division designated as the Sioux Falls District and extending between Cherokee, Iowa, and Sioux Falls, S. Dak., a distance of 96.4 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. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point 3,915 feet east of the station at Sioux Falls and 2,590 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. A siding 1,458 feet in length parallels the main track on the south. The accident occurred at a point 90 feet west of the east siding-switch. As the point of accident is approached from the east there is a tangent 1,239 feet in length, which is followed by a 3° curve to the left 1,204 feet to the point of accident and 166 feet beyond. As the point of accident is approached from the west there are, in succession, a tangent 629 feet in length, a 2° curve to the right 863 feet, a tangent 138 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for west-bound trains varies between 0.3 and 1.003 percent descending for a distance of 8,485 feet to the point of accident and is 1 percent at the point of accident. The grade for east-bound trains is, successively, 0.567 percent descending 1,200 feet, 0.304 percent descending 2,600 feet, 0.8 percent ascending 200 feet, and 1 percent ascending 215 feet to the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

98. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing the time of first class trains.

Second and third class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. In case of accident, the responsibility rests with the approaching train or engine.

* * *

NOTE.--Yard limits will be indicated by yard limit signs and location shown in time-table.

Time-table special instructions provide as follows:

93. Yards:

* * *

Sioux Falls.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 791, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 759, 3 empty cars and a caboose, in the order named. After a terminal air-brake test was made, No. 791 departed from Cherokee at 11:05 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 3 hours 25 minutes late, passed Hills, 20 miles east of Sioux Falls and the last open office, at 4:11 p. m., 3 hours 11 minutes late, passed the east yard-limit sign at Sioux Falls and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour collided with No. 776 at a point 2,590 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. The brakes of this train functioned properly at all points where used en route.

No. 776, an east-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 996, 7 cars and a caboose, in the order named. A terminal air-brake test was made and this train departed from Sioux Falls at 4:45 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, on time, moved to a point 90 feet west of the east siding-switch where it stopped and immediately afterward it was struck by No. 791.

There was no condition of either engine that obscured the vision or distracted the attention of the employees who were on the engines.

From an engine moving in either direction in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view of a train approaching from the opposite direction is restricted to a distance of about 800 feet, because of track curvature and buildings and vegetation adjacent to the track.

Both engines remained upright at the point of impact. The engine truck and the pilot of engine 759, of No. 791, were destroyed, both cylinders were broken and the front end and the cab were badly damaged. Engine 996, of No. 776, was not derailed but its pilot was destroyed. The front end and the cab were badly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:46 p. m.

The employee killed was the front brakeman of No. 776. The employees injured were the conductor and the engineer of No. 791.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that within yard limits trains and engines may use the main tracks without protecting against second-class, inferior class and extra trains. All except first-class trains must be operated

prepared to stop unless the way is seen or known to be clear. The surviving employees involved understood these requirements.

As No. 791 was approaching the east yard-limit sign at Sioux Falls, the speed was 35 or 40 miles per hour. The engineer and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The fireman had become ill en route and the front brakeman was performing the duties of the fireman. When the engine reached a point about 500 feet east of the east siding-switch, the front brakeman saw smoke in the vicinity of the switch and he called a warning to the engineer, who immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but he was unable to stop his train short of No. 776. The speed of No. 791 was about 15 miles per hour when the engineer and the front brakeman jumped off just before the collision occurred.

As No. 776 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 10 miles per hour. The engineer saw No. 791 approaching in the vicinity of the east siding-switch and stopped his train by an emergency application of the brakes just before the collision occurred.

No. 776 was a second-class train and No. 791 was a third-class train; therefore, under the rules the speed of each train was required to be so controlled that each could be stopped short of a train, obstruction or switch not properly lined. Since No. 776 stopped before the collision occurred, this train was being operated in accordance with the yard-limit rule. If the speed of No. 791 had been controlled in accordance with the yard-limit rule, this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of No. 791 moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of November, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.