

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3228
ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR WICKLIFFE, KY., ON
JANUARY 18, 1949

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Illinois Central
Date:	January 18, 1949
Location:	Wickliffe, Ky.
Kind of accident:	Derailment
Train involved:	Freight
Train number:	Extr 1569 North
Engine number:	1569
Consist:	18 cars, caboose
Estimated speed:	15 m. p. h.
Operation:	Signal indications
Track:	Double; tangent; level
Weather:	Raining
Time:	9:25 p. m.
Casualties:	1 killed; 2 injured
Cause:	Sinking of a fill

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3228

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

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

March 14, 1949

Accident near Wickliffe, Ky., on January 18, 1949, caused
by the sinking of a fill.

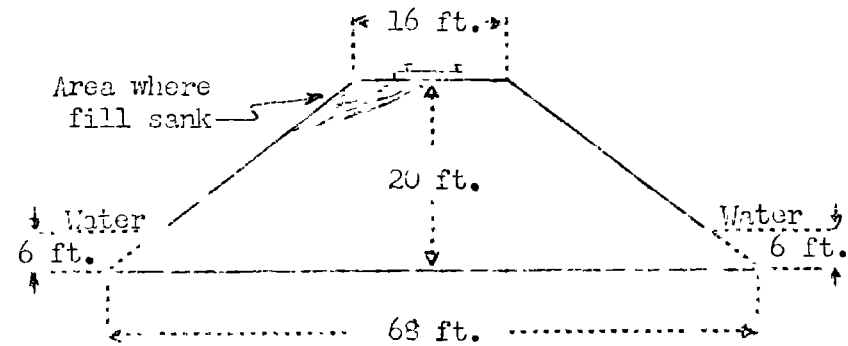
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

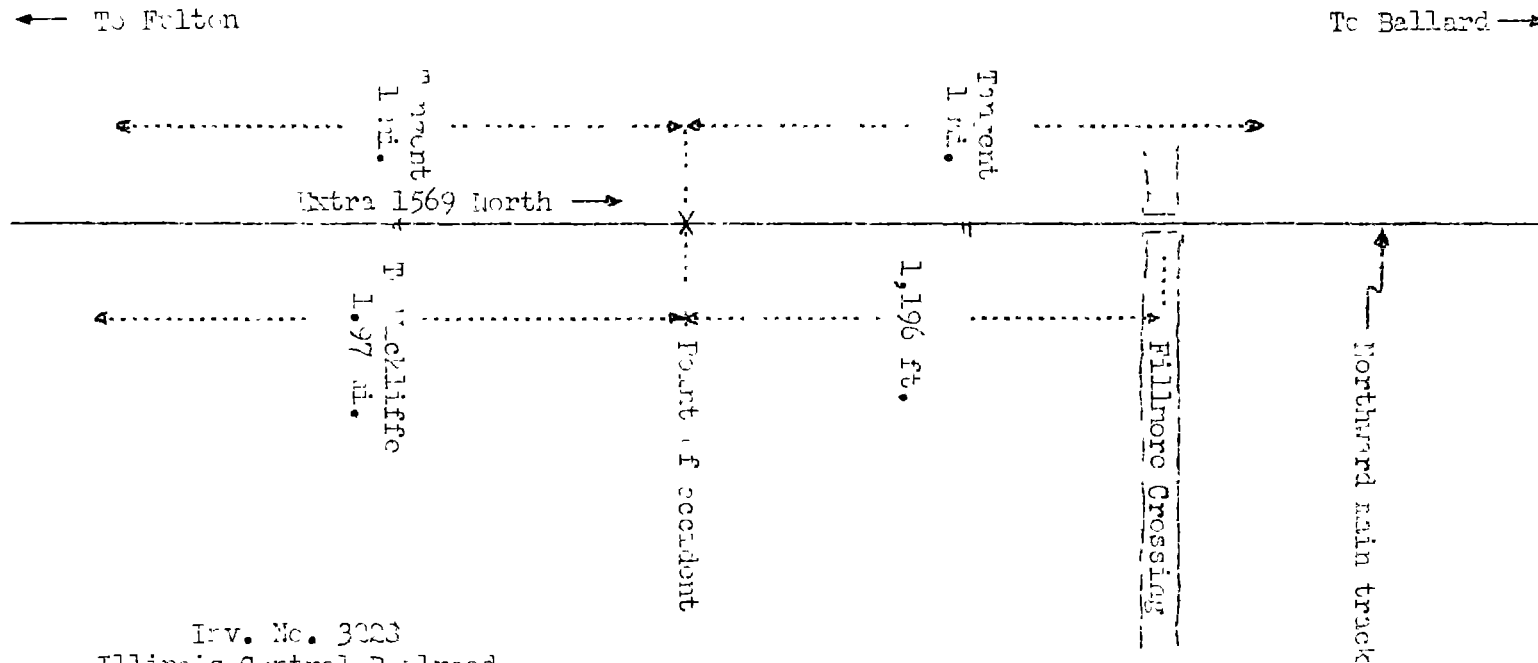
On January 18, 1949, there was a derailment of a freight train on the Illinois Central Railroad near Wickliffe, Ky., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of two employees.

¹ 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.

Cross section of fill at point of accident



o Ballard, Ky.
o 2.90 mi.
o Fillmore
o 0.85 mi.
X Point of accident
o 1.97 mi.
o Wickliffe
o 3.10 mi.
o Winford Jet.
o 32.70 mi.
o Fulton, Ky.



Inv. No. 3223
 Illinois Central Railroad
 Wickliffe, Ky.
 January 13, 1949

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Cairo District extending between Fulton and Ballard, Ky., 41.5 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications. The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point 37.77 miles north of Fulton and 1.97 miles north of Wickliffe. In this vicinity the two main tracks are located on separate fills about 125 feet apart. From the south the northward main track is tangent about 1 mile to the point of accident and about 1 mile northward. Throughout this distance the grade is practically level.

The track structure of the northward main track consists of 112-pound rail, 39 feet in length, laid on an average of 24 treated ties to the rail length. It is fully tieplated with double-shoulder tie plates, single-spiked, and is provided with 4-hole joint bars 24 inches in length and 8 rail anchors per rail length. It is ballasted with slag ballast to a depth of 30 inches. The fill supporting the northward main track is approximately 20 feet high, and is 16 feet wide at the top and 68 feet wide at the bottom. The junction of the Ohio River and the Mississippi River is about 1/4 mile directly west of the point of accident.

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

27. Flagging.--* * *

* * *

Where the conditions are such as to prevent the passage of trains at normal speed, but will permit the passage of trains at reduced speed, caution signals (yellow) must be placed not less than one mile on each side of point where slow track begins, and farther if necessary. Proceed signals (green) must be placed at points where normal speed may be resumed * * *

Where caution signals are displayed speed must be restricted to fifteen miles per hour unless otherwise specified by train order * * *

In case of temporarily defective track * * * trains must be warned by train order in every case where an accident might result if not so handled.

Slow orders must give location of obstruction and indicate speed (in multiples of five) that is safe. Such obstructions must be protected by caution signals.

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 50 miles per hour but had been restricted by train order to 15 miles per hour in the vicinity of the point of accident.

Description of Accident

At Fulton the crew of Extra 1569 North, a north-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 570 reading as follows:

Reduce speed to 15 Miles Per hour over
Northward track at a Point about 30 Rails
South of Fillmore

Fillmore is located 2.8 miles north of Wickliffe. Extra 1569 North, consisting of engine 1569, 18 cars and a caboose, departed from Fulton at 8:20 p. m., passed Winford Jct., the last open office, 5.07 miles south of the point of accident, at 9:13 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour the engine and the first 15 cars were derailed at a point 1.97 miles north of Wickliffe.

The engine stopped west of the track, at the toe of the fill and on its left side, with the front end 235 feet north of the point of derailment. The engine and the tender, which remained coupled, were badly damaged. The first 14 cars stopped in various positions west of the track. The front truck of the fifteenth car was derailed. Twelve cars were destroyed and two cars were considerably damaged.

The fireman was killed, and the engineer and the front brakeman were injured.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9:25 p. m.

Discussion

At Fulton the crew of Extra 1569 North received copies of train order No. 570, which restricted the speed of all north-bound trains to 15 miles per hour over the northward main track at a point about 1,200 feet south of Fillmore. This train departed from Fulton at 8:20 p. m. As it approached the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly but visibility was somewhat restricted by a heavy rainfall. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the cab of the engine. The automatic block signal governing north-bound trains into the block in which the accident occurred indicated Clear. The engineer said that, when the train was about 2,500 feet south of the point where the accident occurred, he closed the throttle and made a brake-pipe reduction, which reduced the speed of the train to about 15 miles per hour. The engine was riding smoothly and the track ahead appeared to be in normal alinement. The engineer said that the first indication of anything being wrong was when the engine leaned heavily toward the left and then was derailed immediately afterward. The front brakeman, who was on the left side of the engine, said that after the engine leaned to the left he heard a noise indicating that a rail had broken. Immediately afterward, the tender was derailed and the engine was pulled from the track. The fireman was killed.

Examination after the accident disclosed that a section of the fill about 85 feet in length on the west side of the track had sunk. At the point of accident the maximum depth was about 4 feet at the shoulder and it extended under the ties to about the center-line of the track. The track south of the point of accident was in normal alinement and there was no indication of dragging equipment.

The investigation disclosed that on January 17 the engineer of a north-bound passenger train reported rough track at a point about 1,100 feet south of Fillmore. The train dispatcher notified the section foreman, who proceeded immediately to that point. The section foreman found the west rail of the northward main track to be about 1 inch low. He made repairs and reported to the dispatcher at 9:52 a. m. that the track was in condition for normal operation. On January 18, the engineer of a north-bound passenger train reported rough track at the same location. This was the sixteenth north-bound train to pass over the track since it was reported safe for normal operation on the previous day. The dispatcher again notified the section foreman and issued a train order

restricting the speed of all north-bound trains to 20 miles per hour over the location in question. The section foreman, accompanied by several track workmen, proceeded to the location reported by the engineer. He again found the west rail of the northward main track about 1 inch low throughout a distance of about 60 feet. After this rail was raised to its proper height, the track force proceeded to Wickliffe and arrived at that point about 2:45 p. m. At that time the section foreman called the dispatcher by telephone and advised him to reduce the speed restriction from 20 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour over the track in question. The dispatcher then issued train order No. 570 to all north-bound trains. This order was made complete at 2:53 p. m. About 4 p. m., the section foreman again inspected the track in question and it appeared to be safe for operation of trains at a speed of 15 miles per hour. Caution signals were not placed on either side of the defective track. After the track was repaired the second time, three passenger trains and four freight trains passed over the northward main track ahead of Extra 1569 North.

The fill in question was an earthen fill. In 1937 a part of the fill was washed away by a flood. This portion was replaced with earth and slog, and rip-rap was placed at the base of the fill. It had rained steadily throughout a period of several hours prior to the time of the accident. At that time backwater from the Ohio River and the Mississippi River had risen about 6 feet above the bottom of the fill. The engineer of maintenance-of-way of this carrier said that backwater frequently rises on this fill to a height in excess of 6 feet but a sinking of the fill had not occurred at this location prior to the time this accident occurred. Apparently, the earth in the bottom of the fill was softened by water to such an extent that the combined weight of the upper part of the fill and the engine of Extra 1569 North forced the bottom portion of the fill outward and the upper portion downward.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by the sinking of a fill.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourteenth day of March, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.