

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3012
THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT PORT WASHINGTON, N. Y., ON
AUGUST 3, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Long Island
Date: August 3, 1946
Location: Port Washington, N. Y.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Engine : Passenger
Train numbers: Extra 346 East : 449
Engine numbers: 346 : MU 1432
Consist: : 6 cars
Estimated speeds: Standing : 20 m. p. h.
Operation: Operating rules and special instructions
Track: Single; 4⁰ curve; 1.3 percent descending grade westward
Weather: Clear
Time: 11:33 a. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 36 injured
Cause: Failure properly to control speed of No. 449 moving in restricted-speed territory

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3012

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 3, 1910.

THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD COMPANY

September 30, 1946.

Accident at Port Washington, N. Y., on August 3, 1946,
caused by failure properly to control the speed
of No. 449 moving in restricted-speed territory.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 3, 1946, there was a head-end collision between an engine and a passenger train on the Long Island Railroad at Port Washington, N. Y., which resulted in the death of 2 employees, and the injury of 28 passengers and 8 employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the New York Public Service 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.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Great Neck and Port Washington, N. Y., 4.2 miles. Between Great Neck and End of Block, 0.51 mile west of the passenger station at Port Washington, this is a single-track line equipped with power rails for the electric propulsion of trains, over which trains are operated by manual block-signal and cab-signal indications. Within station limits at Port Washington a lead track, designated as track No. 1, converges with the east end of the main track at End of Block and extends eastward 2,686 feet to the passenger station. In the immediate vicinity of the passenger station 3 station tracks, designated from south to north as tracks Nos. 8, 7 and 6, parallel track No. 1 on the south, and 4 station tracks, designated from south to north as tracks Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5, parallel track No. 1 on the north. Movements on the station tracks and movements in either direction on track No. 1 between End of Block and the passenger station are authorized in accordance with operating rules and time-table special instructions. The accident occurred on track No. 1 at a point 249 feet east of End of Block and 2,437 feet west of the passenger station. From the west on the main track to End of Block thence on track No. 1 there are, in succession, a 3° curve to the right 612 feet in length, a tangent 232 feet and a 4° curve to the left 305 feet to the point of accident and 538 feet eastward. From the east on track No. 1 there is a tangent 1,899 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is 1.3 percent descending westward.

At the point where the main track and track No. 1 converge there is a sign immediately south of the south rail. This sign bears the words "End of Block." Manual-block signal O3RA, governing entry of west-bound movements to the main track at End of Block, is 9 feet west of this sign and 258 feet west of the point of accident. Manual-block signal O3L, governing east-bound movements on the main track between this signal and End of Block, is 1.9 miles west of End of Block. Signals O3RA and O3L are controlled from the tower at Great Neck. Telephones for communication between members of train crews and the operator at Great Neck are located at the passenger station immediately south of track No. 1 at a point 697 feet west of the passenger station and on the north side of the track at End of Block.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Restricted Speed--Not exceeding 15 miles per hour prepared to stop short of train, obstruction or switch not properly lined and to look out for broken rail.

* * *

Yard--A system of tracks within defined limits * * * over which movements not authorized by time-table or by train order may be made, subject to prescribed signals and rules, or special instructions.

* * *

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

2417. * * *

Yards indicated by end of block sign instead of yard limit board located at:

* * *

Port Washington

* * *

2480. Trains arriving at * * * Port Washington * * * will report arrival; and westward trains will inquire for orders from signalmen before departure.

3107. Movements on tracks, other than main, secondary and sidings unless otherwise specified must be made at Restricted speed.

The maximum authorized speed for all trains in the territory involved is 15 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 346 East, an east-bound electric engine of the two-unit type, departed from Great Neck, the last open office, at 11:26 a. m., passed signal O3L, which displayed proceed, entered track No. 1 at End of Block, and had just stopped at a point 249 feet east of End of Block when it was struck by No. 449.

No. 449, a west-bound passenger train, consisted of seven multiple-unit passenger-train cars. All cars were of steel construction. This train was being operated from the front control compartment of MU coach 1432, the front unit of the train. It departed from the station at Port Washington at 11:32 a. m., on time, and was moving on track No. 1 at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour when it collided with Extra 346 East.

The force of the impact moved engine 346 backward about 6 feet, and the front end of the first unit was badly damaged. The front end of the first car of No. 449 was crushed inward about 15 feet, and the front truck was forced backward to about

midway of the car. The remainder of the cars were considerably damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:33 a. m.

The conductor and the motorman of No. 449 were killed. The front brakeman, the flagman, and three ticket collectors of No. 449, and the conductor, the front brakeman and the flagman of Extra 346 East were injured.

The MU cars involved are equipped with electro-pneumatic and automatic air brakes. A safety-control feature actuated by a contact plunger on the controller handle is provided. If pressure on this plunger is released, the train brakes will become applied in emergency unless a full-service brake-pipe reduction has been made. The electro-pneumatic and the automatic features of the train-brake system are operated by one brake valve. To change from automatic air-brake operation to electro-pneumatic operation an electric switch adjacent to the brake valve must be actuated by turning a key. To apply manually the brakes in emergency, the brake valve must be moved to the extreme right of the brake valve quadrant.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on track No. 1 between the passenger station and End of Block, Port Washington, 0.51 mile, require all trains to be operated prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction. The crews of east-bound trains are required to report by telephone to the operator at Great Neck when their trains are clear of the block at End of Block. The crews of west-bound trains are required to report by telephone to the operator at Great Neck before departure from Port Washington.

Extra 346 East, an east-bound engine en route from Great Neck to Port Washington, passed signal C3L, which displayed proceed, entered track No. 1 at End of Block and was moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour when the motorman saw No. 449, a west-bound train, approaching about 400 feet distant. The motorman of Extra 346 East immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position and this train had just stopped at a point 249 feet east of End of Block when the engine was struck by No. 449.

No. 449 departed from the passenger station at Port Washington at 11:32 a. m., on time, and this train was moving at a speed of about 20 miles per hour, in territory where it was required to be so operated that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction, when it collided with Extra 346 East. When the collision occurred the conductor and the motorman of No. 449 were in the front control compartment of the first car, and they were killed. The other members of the train crew were

in various locations throughout the cars of the train, and the first they knew of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency immediately before the collision occurred. The brakes of No. 449 had functioned properly when a test was made about 5 minutes prior to departure of this train from the passenger station. The crew of No. 449 had operated an east-bound train which arrived at Port Washington about 30 minutes prior to the departure of No. 449. The operator at Great Neck said that soon after the arrival of the east-bound train at Port Washington the conductor reported to him by telephone the arrival of the east-bound train, but did not report for instructions concerning the movement of No. 449 prior to the departure of that train.

Because of an embankment and vegetation on the inside of the curve on which the accident occurred, the view of the point of accident from either direction was restricted to a distance of about 400 feet.

Since Extra 346 East stopped before the collision occurred, this train was being operated in accordance with the rules. If the speed of No. 449 had been controlled in accordance with the rules governing movements on track No. 1, this accident would not have occurred. Examination after the accident disclosed that the switch of the electro-pneumatic feature of the brake equipment at the front end of the first car of No. 449 was in cut-out position. The road foreman of engines said that motormen operating MU equipment in this territory are instructed to operate this equipment with the electro-pneumatic feature in service. After the accident, braking tests were conducted with a train comparable in consist and brake equipment to that of No. 449 on the day of the accident. During one test this train was stopped from a speed of 20 miles per hour in a distance of 118 feet by an emergency application of the electro-pneumatic brakes. During another test the train was stopped from a speed of 20 miles per hour in a distance of 205 feet by an emergency application of the automatic brakes.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of No. 449 moving in restricted-speed territory.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of September, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.