

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3465
McCLOUD RIVER RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR BARTLE, CALIF., ON
MAY 27, 1952

SUMMARY

Date: May 27, 1952

Railroad: McCloud River

Location: Bartle, Calif.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train
and trailer

Train number: : Extra 26 West

Engine number: : 26

Consist: : 6 cars, caboose

Estimated speed: 10 m. p. h. : 15 m. p. h.

Operation: Train orders

Track: Single; 4° curve; 1.71 percent
descending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 3:15 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured

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

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3465

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

McCLOUD RIVER RAILROAD COMPANY

July 2, 1952

Accident near Bartle, Calif., on May 27, 1952, caused by
failure to provide adequate protection for the movement
of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

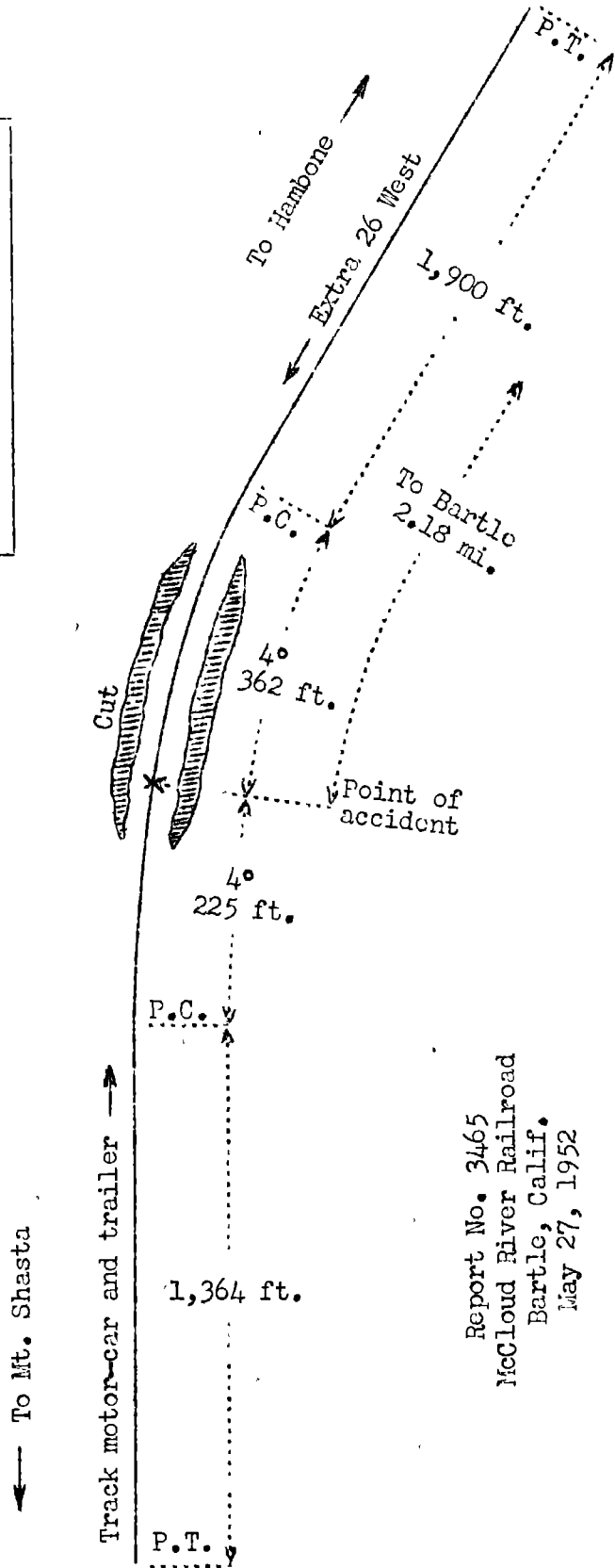
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 27, 1952, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the McCloud River Railroad near Bartle, Calif., which resulted in the death of one maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of two maintenance-of-way employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of California.

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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.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|
| o | Hambone, Calif. | |
| | 13.71 mi. | |
| o | Bartle | |
| | 2.18 mi. | |
| X | Point of accident | |
| | 0.57 mi. | |
| o | Mile Post 33 | |
| | 2.25 mi. | |
| o | Kinyon | |
| | 13.90 mi. | |
| o | McCloud | |
| | 16.85 mi. | |
| o | Mt. Shasta, Calif. | |



Report No. 3465
 McCloud River Railroad
 Bartle, Calif.
 May 27, 1952

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Mt. Shasta and Hambone, Calif., 49.46 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 33.57 miles east of Mt. Shasta and 2.18 miles west of Bartle. From the west there are, in succession, a tangent 1,364 feet in length and a 4° curve to the right 225 feet to the point of accident and 362 feet eastward. From the east there are, in succession, a tangent over 1,900 feet in length and the curve on which the accident occurred. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the track is laid in a cut. The south wall of the cut rises to a maximum height of about 6 feet above the level of the tops of the rails. The grade at the point of accident is 1.71 percent descending westward.

This carrier's safety rules read in part as follows:

169. Employes whose duties require the operation of motor cars must protect themselves by conferring with dispatcher before using cars on main line. * * *

170. Additional train lineups must be secured when possible by track car operators as often as may be necessary for said operator to keep himself fully informed as to train movements at all times.

172. Track cars must be operated with the understanding that trains may be run at any time upon any track in either direction and are subject to delay; therefore, the utmost care must be exercised at all times * * *

198. The operation of track cars on the main track, when handling loaded trailer or push cars, or at times when vision is obstructed due to curvature or other causes, without flag protection, except with definite and absolute information as to the location of trains, is prohibited.

The maximum authorized speeds were 15 miles per hour for track motor-cars with trailers and 30 miles per hour for trains.

Description of Accident

About 3:10 p. m. a track motor-car, headed westward and pushing a trailer, departed east-bound from a point 2.5 miles west of Bartle. The track motor-car was occupied by a section foreman and three sectionmen, and the trailer was occupied by

two sectionmen. While these cars were moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour they collided with Extra 26 West at a point 2.18 miles west of Bartle.

Extra 26 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 26, six cars and a caboose. This train departed from Bartle about 3:10 p. m., and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour it collided with the track motor-car and trailer.

The track motor-car and the trailer were demolished. Extra 26 West stopped with the front of the engine 244 feet west of the point of accident. The front of the engine was slightly damaged.

One sectionman was killed. The section foreman and one sectionman were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:15 p. m.

The track motor-car was of the four-wheel type. It was powered by a 31-1/2 horsepower gasoline motor and was equipped with four-wheel brakes. It weighed 1,800 pounds and had seating capacity for eight persons. It was provided with a windshield. The trailer was of the four-wheel type and was provided with a wooden deck.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 1.83 trains.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier require that the operators of track motor-cars confer with the train dispatcher before operating their track motor-cars on the main track. Operators of track motor-cars are provided with portable telephones for communication with the train dispatcher from any point, and they are instructed that no movement of a track motor-car may be made until it first has been authorized by the train dispatcher. Operators of track motor-cars are not required to make a record of instructions received from the train dispatcher, and the train dispatcher is not required to make a record of track motor-car movements. On this line trains are operated by train orders, which are transmitted directly to conductors by telephone. When a train is to be operated over a district in which section forces are working, it is customary for the train dispatcher to notify the train crews of the locations of the section forces.

On the day of the accident a section force consisting of a foreman and five sectionmen was engaged in replacing ties in the vicinity of Mile Post 33, 2.75 miles west of Bartle. During the afternoon the section foreman and a road master proceeded from Mile Post 33 to Kinyon, 2.25 miles west of Mile Post 33, on the track motor-car. After they arrived at Kinyon the section foreman communicated by telephone with the train dispatcher and told him that he desired to return to Mile Post 33. The foreman said that the train dispatcher authorized the movement and informed him that there were no trains in the vicinity. When the foreman arrived at Mile Post 33 he left the track motor-car on the main track during a period of about 45 minutes while work at that point was being completed. The members of the section force then boarded the track motor-car and the trailer and departed eastward. The foreman said that he considered calling the train dispatcher before leaving Mile Post 33, but because he had been informed a short time before that there were no trains in the vicinity he decided that a call was unnecessary. After departing from Mile Post 33 the section force made minor repairs to the track at a point 2.5 miles west of Bartle. They then proceeded eastward. As the track motor-car was approaching the curve on which the accident occurred, the wall of the cut and vegetation along the track restricted the occupants' view of the track ahead to a distance of about 400 feet east of the west end of the curve. The foreman said that when the track motor-car entered the curve his attention was distracted momentarily and he did not observe the approaching train until immediately before the collision occurred.

The train dispatcher said the section foreman called from Kinyon about 2:15 p. m. and requested authority to operate the track motor-car from Kinyon to Mile Post 33. He told the section foreman that Extra 26 West was approaching Hambone and that the section foreman could expect the train to leave Bartle earlier than usual. A short time later the conductor of Extra 26 West called from Hambone, and the dispatcher issued a train order authorizing the train to proceed from Hambone to Bartle. At 3:08 p. m. the conductor called from Bartle and reported that the train had arrived at that station. The dispatcher then issued a train order authorizing the train to proceed from Bartle to McCloud, 18.9 miles west of Bartle, and also instructed the conductor to notify the enginemen to watch for the section force at Mile Post 33. Until after the accident occurred, the dispatcher was not aware that the section force was en route from Mile Post 33 to Bartle.

Extra 26 West departed from Bartle soon after the conductor received the train order. As this train was

approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the cab of the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The conductor had given the employees on the engine a message instructing them to watch for the section force at Mile Post 53, and the message had been read and understood by each of these employees. After the engine entered the curve on which the accident occurred the engineer could not see the track ahead. Both the fireman and the front brakeman said they called a warning immediately after they saw the track motor-car. The engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the accident occurred before the train could be stopped.

The operators of track motor-cars on this line are instructed that track motor-car movements must be authorized by the train dispatcher, but the rules do not specify the conditions under which such authority may be granted nor prescribe the manner in which it will be granted. In the instant case the section foreman was authorized to operate the track motor-car from Kinyon to Mile Post 33. Before it was known that the track motor-car had arrived at Mile Post 53, Extra 26 West was authorized by train order to proceed from Bartle to McCloud. Notifying the crew of Extra 26 West of the probable location of the section force did not provide adequate protection for the movement of the track motor-car. The accident might have been averted if the section foreman had obtained additional authority from the train dispatcher before proceeding beyond Mile Post 33. As a result of a misunderstanding which occurred during the conversation between the section foreman and the train dispatcher, the section foreman thought the movement from Mile Post 33 to Bartle could be made with safety, and the train dispatcher thought the section foreman would be expecting the train.

Since January 1, 1944, the Commission has investigated 89 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 72 persons and the injury of 123 persons. In the reports covering the investigations of these accidents, the Commission reportedly has recommended that the carrier involved should 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 McCloud River Railroad Company provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this second day of July, 1952.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.