

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2692
THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ST. LOUIS PARK, MINN., ON
APRIL 11, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Minneapolis & St. Louis
Date: April 11, 1943
Location: St. Louis Park, Minn.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: C. St. P. M. & O. : M. & St. L.
freight passenger
Train numbers: 172 : 152
Engine numbers: 439 : 226
Consist: 42 cars, caboose : 4 cars
Speed: Standing : 25 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and operating rules
Track: Double; tangent; 0.12 percent
ascending grade eastward
Weather: Dense fog
Time: About 10:37 p. m.
Casualties: 25 injured
Cause: Accident caused by failure of the
preceding train to clear the time
of a following superior train and
then by failure to provide adequate
flag protection
Recommendation: That the Minneapolis & St. Louis
Railroad Company establish an
adequate block system on the line
on which this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2692

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

THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

May 20, 1943.

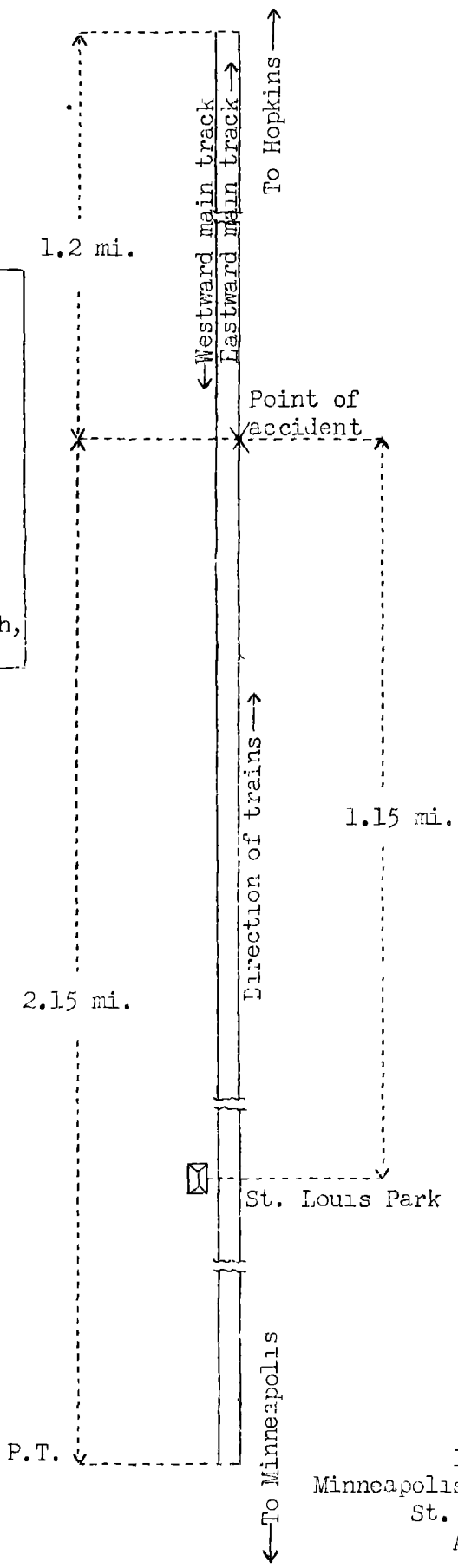
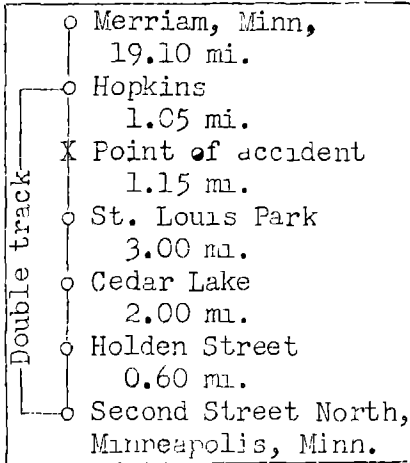
Accident near St. Louis Park, Minn., on April 11, 1943,
caused by failure of the preceding train to clear
the time of a following superior train and then by
failure to provide adequate flag protection.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On April 11, 1943, there was a rear-end collision between a Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omana Railway freight train and a Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad passenger train on the line of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad near St. Louis Park, Minn., which resulted in the injury of 21 passengers and 4 employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse 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.



Inv. No. 2692
 Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad
 St. Louis Park, Minn.
 April 11, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

Trains of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway, hereinafter referred to as the C. St. P. M. & O., are operated over the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad, hereinafter referred to as the M. & St. L., between Holden Street, Minneapolis, and Merriam, Minn., 26.3 miles. This accident occurred on that part of the First District extending between Second Street North, Minneapolis, and Hopkins, Minn., 7.8 miles. This is a double-track line, within yard limits, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable and operating rules. There is no block system in use and there are no sidings between Minneapolis and Hopkins. The accident occurred on the eastward main track 6.75 miles east of Second Street North, Minneapolis, and 1.15 miles east of the station at St. Louis Park. Approaching from the west the track is tangent 2.15 miles to the point of accident and 1.2 miles beyond. In the vicinity of the point of accident the grade for east-bound trains is 0.12 percent ascending.

DEFINITIONS

Under Control--Being able to stop within the distance track is seen to be clear.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee, and then proceed with caution prepared to stop short of train or obstruction.

86. Unless otherwise provided, an inferior train must clear the time of a superior train, in the same direction, not less than five minutes; but must be clear at the time a first class train, in the same direction, is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown.

93. * * * All trains (except first class trains) must * * * pass through * * * yard limits under control. * * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection.

99-j. When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. * * * lighted fusees must be thrown off at frequent intervals.

99-n. Flagman's signals:

* * *

Night signals - A red light,
A white light,
Torpedoes and
Fusces.

Special instructions read in part as follows:

13.

* * *

* * * between Holden Street and * * * Hopkins, all trains, * * *, when occupying main tracks, will protect at all times in accordance with Rule No. 99.

* * *

17. * * * between Minneapolis and Hopkins * * *, train orders will not be required * * *

18. Between Hopkins and Minneapolis, second and inferior class and extra trains * * * may run ahead of first class trains which are 15 minutes or more late, * * *, without orders.

Yard Limit Stations

First District -

Minneapolis - Hopkins

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 172, an east-bound second-class C. St. P. M. & O. freight train, consisted of engine 439, 39 loaded and 3 empty cars and a caboose. This train entered the eastward main track at Holden Street, Minneapolis, about 10:05 p. m., passed Cedar Lake, 3 miles west of St. Louis Park and the last open office, at 10:16 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 2 hours 21 minutes late, passed St. Louis Park at 10:28 p. m., according to statements of the crew, and stopped about 10:33 p. m. with the caboose standing at a point 1.15 miles east of the station at St. Louis Park. About 4 minutes later the caboose was struck by No. 152.

No. 152, an east-bound first-class H. & St. L. passenger train, consisted of engine 226, one mail-baggage car, one baggage car and two coaches, in the order named. All cars were of steel-underframe construction. This train departed from Minneapolis, 5.6 miles west of St. Louis Park, at 10:20 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, on time, passed Cedar Lake about 10:30 p. m., according to statements of the crew,

passed St. Louis Park about 10:35 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with No. 172.

The caboose of No. 172 was practically demolished and the wreckage fouled the westward main track. The first three cars ahead of the caboose were derailed. One was demolished and the remainder were badly damaged. The fourth and fifth cars ahead of the caboose were considerably damaged. Engine 226 was derailed and stopped, considerably damaged, at a point 176 feet east of the point of collision. The first, third and fourth cars of No. 152 were slightly damaged.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:37 p. m.

The employees injured were the engineer, the fireman, the conductor and the brakeman of No. 152.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement on the eastward main track in the vicinity of the point of accident was 11.1 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that an inferior train must be clear at the time a first-class train in the same direction is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown. When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. Lighted fuseses must be thrown off at frequent intervals. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train the flagman must go back immediately with flagmen's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection.

No. 152, an east-bound first-class train, was due to leave Holden Street, Minneapolis, 5 miles west of St. Louis Park, at 10:23 p. m., Cedar Lake, 3 miles west of St. Louis Park, at 10:28 p. m., St. Louis Park at 10:33 p. m., and was due to arrive at Hopkins, 2.2 miles east of St. Louis Park and its terminal station, at 10:40 p. m. No. 172, an east-bound second-class freight train, passed Cedar Lake at 10:16 p. m., passed St. Louis Park at 10:28 p. m., and stopped about 10:33 p. m. with the rear end standing 1.15 miles east of the station at St. Louis Park. About 4 minutes later the rear end was struck

by No. 152.

As No. 152 was approaching the point where the collision occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead and the fireman was tending the fire. The headlight was lighted and there was no condition of the engine that obscured the view or distracted the attention of the engineer. Because of dense fog, visibility in this vicinity was restricted to a distance of about 600 feet. When the engine reached a point about 600 feet west of the point where the collision occurred, the engineer observed simultaneously the lighted markers of No. 172 showing red to the rear, and the reflection of a fusee. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position and closed the throttle, but he could not stop his train short of No. 172. The speed was about 25 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The first the members of the train crew knew of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Under the rules, No. 172 was required to be into clear at St. Louis Park, if it proceeded to that point ahead of No. 152, not later than 10:28 p. m., the time No. 152 was due to leave Cedar Lake, the next station in the rear where time was shown. However, there is no siding at St. Louis Park or between St. Louis Park and Hopkins. The crew of No. 172 expected their train to reach Hopkins sufficiently in advance of No. 152 to avoid delay to that train, but a lighted fusee was encountered about 1 mile west of Hopkins, and the train was stopped by an emergency application of the brakes. The conductor of No. 172 said a lighted fusee was displayed on the rear end of the caboose after the train passed Cedar Lake and he dropped a lighted fusee from the rear of the caboose just prior to the time the brakes were applied in emergency. Soon after the brakes were applied the flagman lighted a fusee, and, before the train stopped, he proceeded westward to provide flag protection. He passed the fusee that had been thrown from the train and had reached a point about 550 feet to the rear of his caboose when No. 152 passed him. Between Holden Street and Hopkins No. 172 was required to proceed in such manner that it could be stopped within the distance the track was seen to be clear. The maximum speed attained by this train between Holden Street and the point of collision was about 20 miles per hour. The maximum authorized speed for No. 152 was 50 miles per hour. Because of dense fog, visibility was materially restricted. Under the rules, flag protection was required for No. 172 and lighted fusees were required to be thrown off at frequent intervals. The conductor and the flagman said they considered that the lighted fusee

displayed from the rear of the caboose and the fusee dropped just before their train stopped afforded sufficient protection against following trains while their train was moving. If the following train had encountered a burning fusee it would have been required to stop and then to proceed prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction. No. 172 stopped about 10:53 p. m. and the flagman had reached a point only about 550 feet to the rear when No. 152 passed him about 4 minutes later.

Although this accident occurred within yard limits, if an adequate block system had been in use the following train would not have been permitted to enter a block occupied by the preceding train, and this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure of the preceding train to clear the time of a following superior train and then by failure to provide adequate flag protection.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twentieth day of May, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.