

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2817
THE MISSOURI PACIFIC LINES
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR DEWALT, TEXAS, ON
AUGUST 16, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Missouri Pacific
Date: August 16, 1944
Location: Dewalt, Texas
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Freight train : Motor-truck
Train number: 371
Engine number: 228
Consist: Auxiliary water car,
27 cars, caboose
Estimated speed: 20 m. p. h. : 35 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 0.1 percent
ascending grade southward
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 53°; level
Weather: Clear
Time: 5:05 p. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 2 injured
Cause: Motor-truck being driven upon
highway grade crossing immedi-
ately in front of approaching
train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2817

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

THE MISSOURI PACIFIC LINES

September 15, 1944.

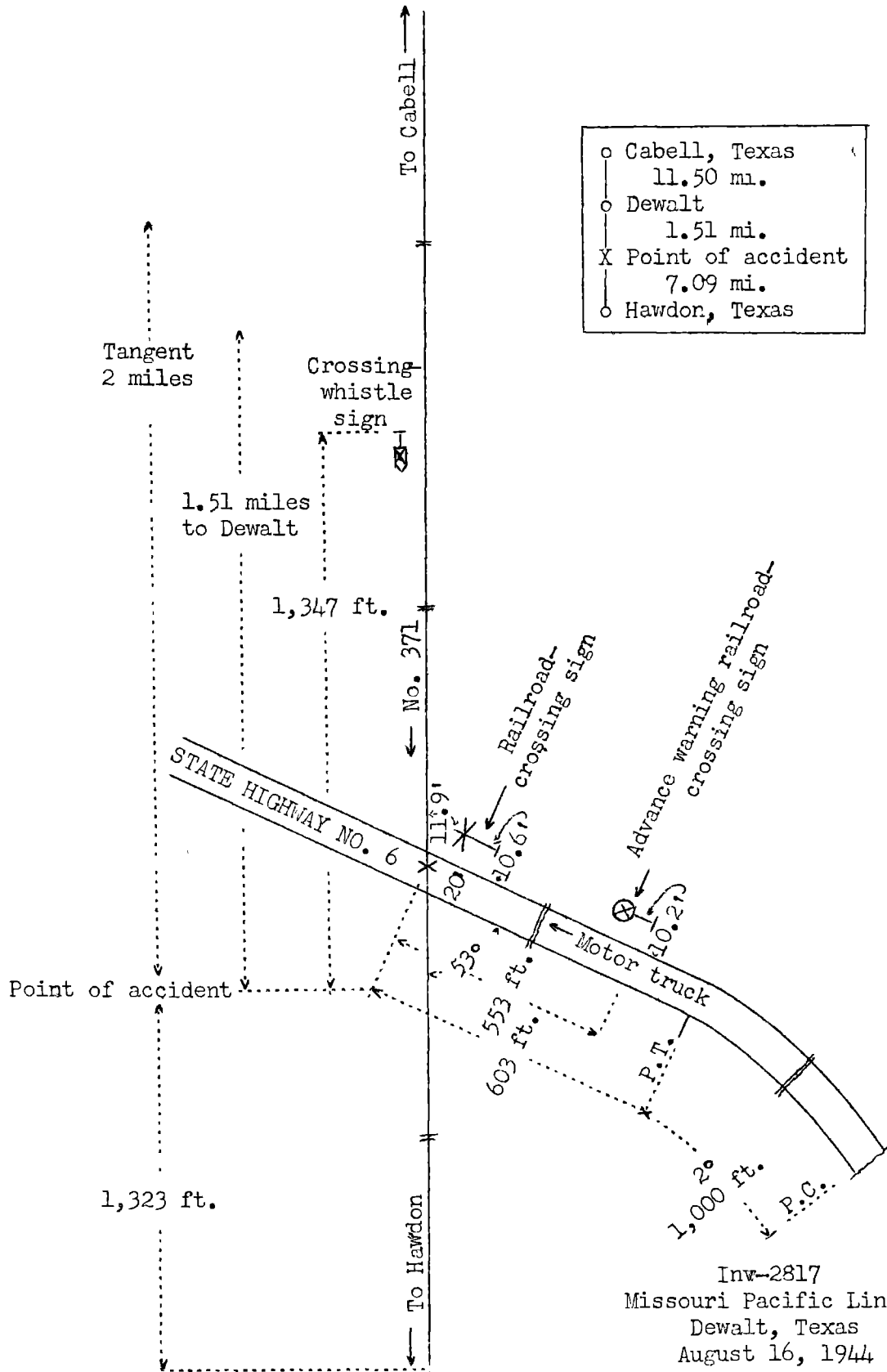
Accident near Dewalt, Texas, on August 16, 1944, caused
by a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade
crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On August 16, 1944, there was a collision between a freight train on the Missouri Pacific Lines and a motor-truck at a highway grade crossing near Dewalt, Texas, which resulted in the death of two train-service employees, and the injury of two train-service employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv-2817
 Missouri Pacific Lines
 Dewalt, Texas
 August 16, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Palestine Division designated as the Sugar Land Subdivision and extending southward from Cabell to Hawdon, Texas, 20.1 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred 13.01 miles south of Cabell, at a point 1.51 miles south of Dewalt, where the railroad was crossed at grade by state highway No. 6. The track was tangent throughout a distance of 2 miles north of this point and 1,323 feet southward. The grade for south-bound trains was 0.1 percent ascending.

State highway No. 6 intersected the railroad at an angle of 53°. From the east on the highway there was a 2° curve to the left about 1,000 feet in length, which was followed by a tangent 603 feet to the crossing and 165 feet westward. The grade was practically level. The highway was surfaced with concrete to a width of 20 feet. The crossing was surfaced with planks to a width of 25 feet.

An advance warning railroad-crossing sign was located 553 feet east of the crossing and 10.2 feet north of the highway. This sign was a disc 24 inches in diameter mounted on a mast. It bore two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles at its center and bore the letters "R.R." in black and in colorless reflector buttons on a yellow background. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign was located to the right of the direction of west-bound traffic, 11.9 feet east of the track and 10.6 feet north of the highway. This sign was mounted on a mast and bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in white and in colorless reflector buttons on a black background. A crossing-whistle sign for south-bound trains was located 1,347 feet north of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

NOTE.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds.
* * *

SOUND.	INDICATION.
* * *	
(1) ___ o _____	Approaching public crossings at grade. To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car.
	* * *

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 20 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 371, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 228, 1 auxiliary water car, 27 cars and a caboose, departed from Dewalt about 5 p. m., 1 hour 5 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a highway grade crossing and was derailed.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned by Weaver & Son Oil Co., El Campo, Texas. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Texas operator's license No. 259625. The tractor was a 1941 White model, and bore Texas license No. 537-234. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels, hydraulic brakes with a vacuum booster, and an enclosed steel cab. It was hauling a semi-trailer, which bore Texas license No. 71-993. The semi-trailer had dual tires on its wheels, was provided with vacuum brakes operated by a lever in the cab, and was equipped with a steel tank. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 3,831 gallons of gasoline. The gross weight of the tractor, the semi-trailer and cargo was 38,000 pounds. This vehicle was moving westward on the highway at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour. It proceeded upon the crossing and the semi-trailer was struck by No. 371.

A south-bound train approaching on the railroad could be seen by the driver of a west-bound vehicle throughout a distance of approximately 260 feet immediately east of the crossing. There was no condition about the enclosed cab of the motor-truck that restricted the vision.

The semi-trailer was torn loose from the tractor and was demolished. The tank was punctured, and escaping gasoline became ignited. The engine and the first four cars were derailed and damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:05 p. m.

The fireman and the front brakeman were killed. The engineer and the flagman were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing on the railroad was 1.86 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01

p. m., August 22, 1944, 212 automobiles, 118 trucks, 3 busses and 14 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

Discussion

No. 371 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 20 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 20 miles per hour. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The whistle signal for the crossing was sounded in compliance with the rules. When the engine was about 200 feet north of the crossing the fireman saw the motor-truck proceeding upon the crossing, and he called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

The crossing was protected by an advance warning sign and a cross-buck sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver, and prior to the accident he had made several trips over the crossing. He said that he did not see or hear the approaching train until his vehicle was a short distance east of the crossing. Then he increased the speed of the vehicle in an attempt to pass over the crossing ahead of the train, but the accident occurred before the semi-trailer was clear of the crossing.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a motor-truck being driven upon a highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of September, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.