INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 5044

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR McFADDIN, TEX., ON

DECEMBER 9, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Missouri Pacific	
Date:	December 8, 1946	
Location:	McFaddin, Tex.	
Kind of accident:	Rear-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Passenger
Train numbers:	Second 60	: 12
Engine numbers:	5207	: 6414
Consists:	Auxiliary water car, 75 cars, caboose	: 10 cars
Estimated speeds:	Standing	: 25 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; 0.08 percent ascending grade northward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	2:43 p. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 4 injured	
Cause:	Failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3044

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

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

December 31, 1946

Accident near McFaddin, Tex., on December 8, 1946, caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner.

On December 8, 1946, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Missouri Pacific Railroad near McFaddin, Tex., which resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of one person carried under contract and three employees.

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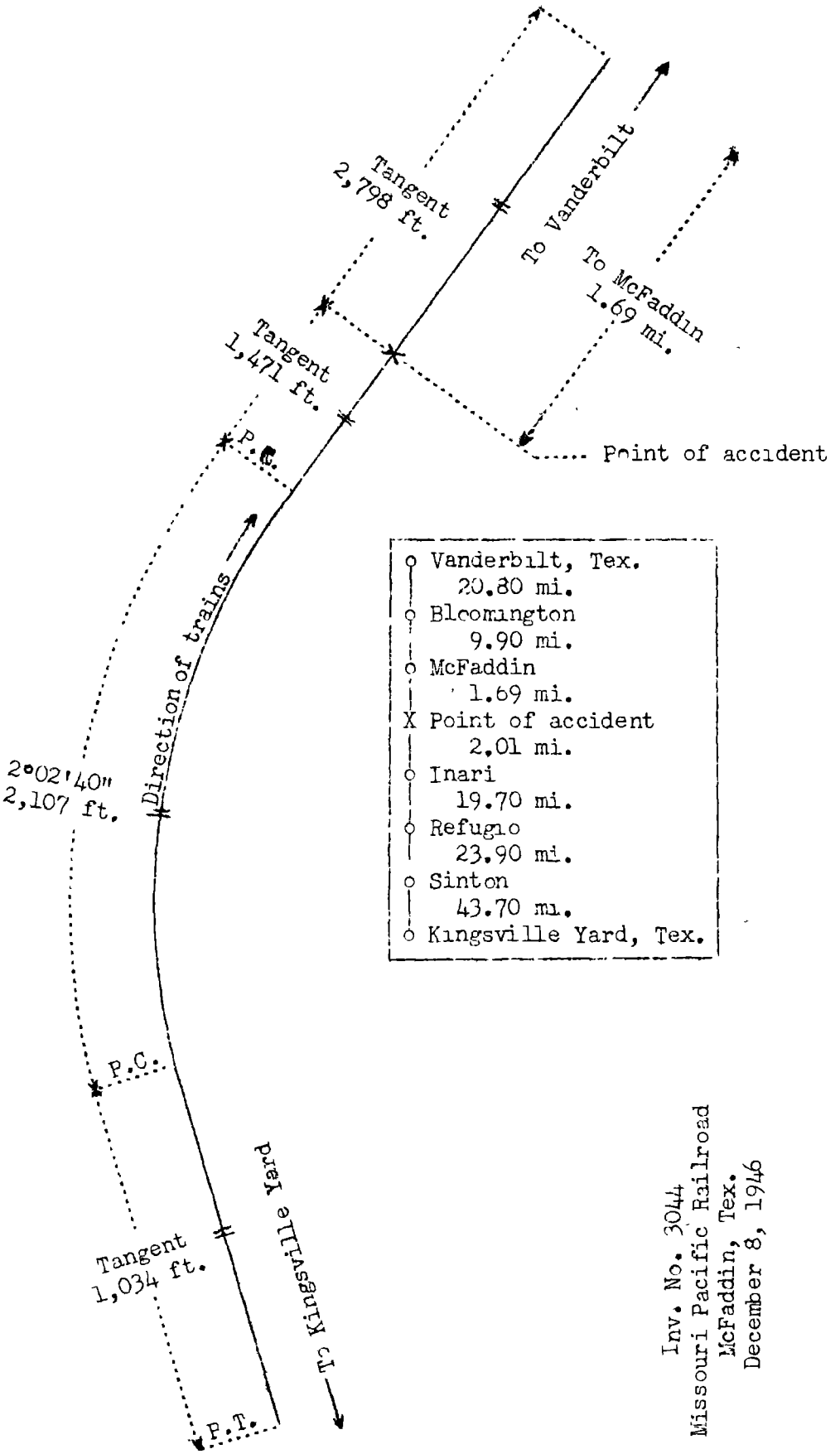
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 3044
Missouri Pacific Railroad
McFaddin, Tex.
December 8, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Kingsville Division extending between Kingsville Yard and Vanderbilt, Tex., 121.7 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred 89.31 miles north of Kingsville Yard and 1.69 miles south of the station at McFaddin. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 1,034 feet in length, a 2°02'40" curve to the right 2,107 feet and a tangent 1,471 feet to the point of accident and 2,798 feet northward. The grade is 0.08 percent ascending northward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train or engine to be reduced.

* * *

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee. Train may then proceed at restricted speed.

13. The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to proceed at restricted speed. * * *

* * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals (A red flag,
(Torpedoes and
(Fusees.

* * *

S-72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second, * * *

* * *

86. * * *

Outside of automatic block signal territory, unless otherwise provided, an inferior train must be in the 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; * * *

* * *

91. Unless some form of block signal is used:

Trains in the same direction must keep not less than five minutes apart, except in closing up at stations.

* * *

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, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees.

* * *

FORMS OF
TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

E.

Time Orders.

(1) No. 1 Eng 39 * * * wait at
N until 9 59 a m
* * *
R 10 55 a m, etc.

The train, * * * named, must not pass the designated points, before the times given. Other trains receiving the order are required to run with respect to the time specified at the designated points, or any intermediate station where schedule time is earlier than the time specified in the order, as before required to run with respect to the schedule time of the train * * * named.

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 65 miles per hour for passenger trains and 50 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

Train order No. 52, addressed to No. 12 and Second 60 at Sinton, 47.3 miles south of McFaddin, read in part as follows.

No 12 wait at

Sinton until 1 30 p m
* * *
Refugio 2 03 p m
* * *
Inari 2 25 p m
* * *

Refugio and Inari are, respectively, 25.4 and 5.7 miles south of McFaddin.

Second 60, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 5207, one auxiliary water car, 75 cars and a caboose. At Sinton the crew of Second 60 received copies of train order No. 52, and this train departed at 12 25 p. m., 2 hours 21 minutes late, departed from Refugio, the last open office, at 1:25 p. m., 2 hours 25 minutes late, passed Inari about 2:06 p. m. and stopped on the main track about 2:12 p. m., in compliance with signals given by the flagman of a preceding train, with the rear end standing 1.69 miles south of the station at McFaddin. About 31 minutes later, the rear end of Second 60 was struck by No. 12.

No. 12, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 5414, one mail-passenger car, one baggage car, two express cars, two baggage cars, one mail-baggage car and three coaches, in the order named. The second to the fourth cars, inclusive, were of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder of the cars were of all-steel construction. At Sinton the crew of No. 12 received copies of train order No. 52, and this train departed at 1:42 p. m., 31 minutes late, departed from Refugio at 2:20 p. m., 34 minutes late, passed Inari about 2:42 p. m. and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with Second 60.

The caboose and the rear three cars of Second 60 were demolished. The fourth car ahead of the caboose of Second 60 and the engine and the rear wheels of the rear truck of the first car of No. 12 were derailed. The engine of No. 12 stopped on its left side, and was badly damaged.

The fireman of No. 12 was killed. The engineer, the front brakeman and the flagman of No. 12 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2 43 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 14.33 trains.

Discussion

Second 60, a north-bound second-class train, stopped on the main track about 2:12 p. m., in compliance with signals given by the flagman of a preceding train, with the rear end 1.69 miles south of the station at McFaddin. Several minutes later an unsuccessful attempt was made to start Second 60. Then the engine and the first 20 cars were moved to the siding at McFaddin, and the engine was returning to the remaining portion when the rear end of this portion was struck by No. 12, a north-bound first-class train. Under the provisions of train order No. 52, which required No. 12 to wait at Inari, 3.7 miles south of McFaddin, until 2:25 p. m., Second 60, which was inferior by class to No. 12, was required to be clear of the main track at McFaddin not later than 2:25 p. m., or to provide flag protection against No. 12. The employees concerned understood these provisions.

No. 12 was moving at a speed of about 65 miles per hour, in territory where the maximum speed for this train was 65 miles per hour, when the engineer saw stop signals being given with a red flag about 800 feet distant, and the caboose of the preceding train about 800 feet north of the point where the signals were being given. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but was unable to stop the train in time to prevent the collision. The fireman of No. 12 was killed. The engineer said that no flagging signal was seen or heard in this vicinity prior to the time he first observed the signals given with the red flag. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

When the accident occurred the enginemen of Second 60 and the front brakeman were on the engine, and the conductor was about midway of the train. These employees thought the flagman was providing protection for the rear end of their train. The flagman said that soon after his train stopped he proceeded southward and had reached a point which he thought was about 2,400 feet south of his caboose when he saw No. 12

approaching about 1,200 feet distant. He immediately gave stop signals with a red flag and continued to give stop signals until the engine of No. 12 passed him. He thought he had reached the maximum possible distance to the rear of his train during the time available.

Because of vegetation on the inside of the curve immediately south of the point where the accident occurred, the view of the track ahead from the engine of a north-bound train is materially restricted.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. The only provision for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and by flagman's signals. The rules require that a following train must be spaced at least 5 minutes behind a preceding train. In this case the preceding train departed from Refugio, 22.71 miles south of the point where the accident occurred, 55 minutes before the following train departed from that station. The collision occurred before the trains reached Bloomington, the next open office, 11.59 miles north of the point of accident. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block.

No recommendation is made here concerning additional protection for operation of trains at the maximum authorized speed disclosed in this investigation, because there is now pending before the Commission docket No. 29543, which is an investigation instituted May 20, 1946, by the Commission on its own motion, to determine whether it is necessary, in the public interest, to require any common carrier by railroad to install block signal system, interlocking, automatic train stop, train control and/or cab signal devices, and/or other similar appliances, methods and systems intended to promote safety of railroad operation, upon the whole or any part of its railroad on which any train is operated at a speed of 80 or more miles per hour.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirty-first day of December 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.