

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3658  
MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR O'NEAL, ARK , CN  
OCTOBER 6, 1955

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SUMMARY

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Date.	October 6, 1955
Railroad.	Missouri Pacific
Location.	O'Neal, Ark.
Kind of accident:	Collision
Equipment involved.	Track motor-car • Freight train C-19
Train number:	293
Locomotive number:	: Diesel-electric units 4339, 4337, and 4343
Consist:	: 49 cars, caboose
Estimated speeds.	5-12 m. p. h. • 45 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders
Track.	Single; 2° curve, 0.03 percent descending grade southward
Weather:	Clear
Time:	10:35 a. m.
Casualties:	1 killed
Cause:	Failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor- car

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3658

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

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

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November 21, 1955

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Accident near O'Neal, Ark., on October 6, 1955, caused  
by failure to provide adequate protection for the  
movement of a track motor-car.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

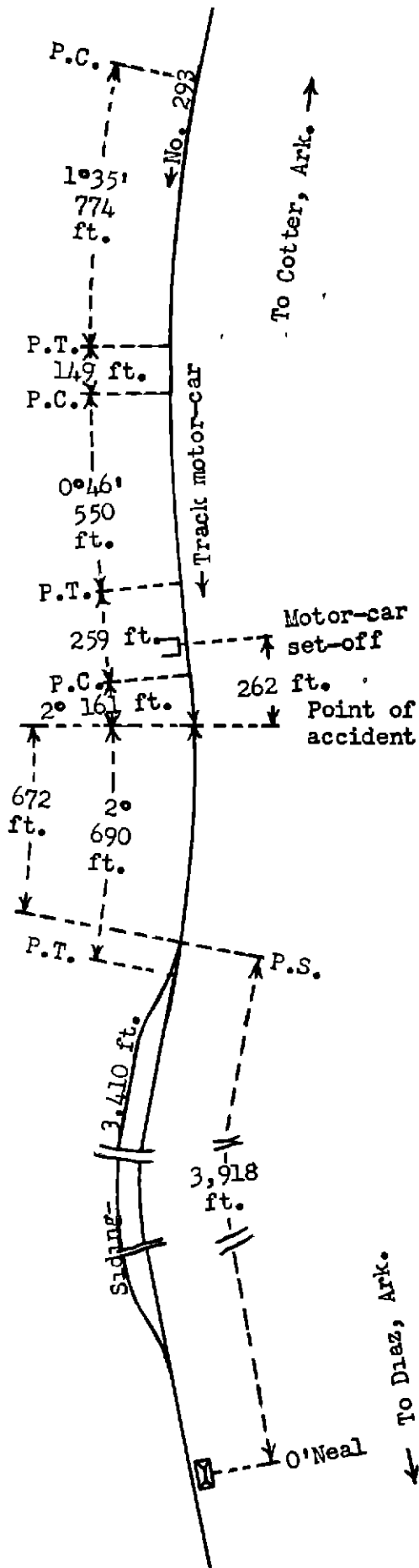
CLARKE, Commissioner:

On October 6, 1955, there was a collision between a  
track motor-car and a freight train on the Missouri Pacific  
Railroad near O'Neal, Ark., which resulted in the death of  
one maintenance-of-way employee.

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Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and  
disposition.



•	Cotter, Ark.
	69.17 mi.
•	Guion
	12.57 mi.
×	Point of accident
	0.87 mi.
•	O'Neal
	12.55 mi.
•	Batesville
	27.63 mi.
•	Diaz, Ark.

Report No. 3658  
Missouri Pacific Railroad  
O'Neal, Ark.  
October 6, 1955

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Joplin and White River Divisions extending between Cotter and Diaz, Ark., 122.79 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At C'Neal, 32.61 miles south of Cotter, a siding 3,410 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The north switch of the siding is 3,918 feet north of the station shelter. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 672 feet north of the north siding-switch. From the north there are, in succession, a  $1^{\circ}35'$  curve to the left 774 feet in length, a tangent 149 feet, a  $0^{\circ}46'$  curve to the left 550 feet, a tangent 259 feet, and a  $2^{\circ}$  curve to the right 131 feet to the point of accident and 690 feet southward. At the point of accident the grade is 0.03 percent descending southward.

A set-off for track motor-cars is located on the west side of the track at a point 934 feet north of the north siding-switch.

This carrier's rules for the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

144. Protection against Trains and Other Cars.--

(a) Care and Caution.--In the operation of cars, foremen and others must move at all times with care and caution necessary for safety, expecting trains at any time without notice and protecting when necessary, using prescribed signals. Care must be exercised to avoid collision with trains \* \* \*

\* \* \*

(c-1) Approximate Train Information.--

As often as necessary foremen and other operators of cars shall, when practicable, secure in writing, information showing the approximate arrival time of trains.

This information is for use in planning work in such way as to minimize delays to traffic, and not as authority to occupy the main track. Main track may be occupied by track cars only by full compliance with all rules.

(c-2) Positive Train Information.--In territory authorized by special instructions issued by Superintendent, complete and definite information will be issued by Train Dispatcher for use of Maintenance of Way Foremen in going to and returning from work.

This positive information on trains will be designated by the symbol "PX" and will be numbered consecutively each day beginning at midnight. \* \* \*

The PX system of issuing line-ups is in effect in the territory involved.

The maximum authorized speeds were 45 miles per hour for the freight train and 20 miles per hour for the track motor-car.

#### Description of Accident

Track motor-car C-19, coupled to a trailer on which hand tools were loaded, departed north-bound from Batesville, 12.55 miles south of O'Neal, about 7:30 a. m. The track motor-car was occupied by a section foreman and five sectionmen and was being operated by the foreman. It proceeded to a point approximately 1.33 miles north of the siding at O'Neal, where the track motor-car was turned. It then proceeded southward and entered the siding at O'Neal where the trailer was removed from the track and maintenance work was performed. About 10:30 a. m. the track motor-car, moving in backward motion and occupied by the section force, re-entered the main track at the north siding-switch, proceeded northward, and was stopped at a point approximately 900 feet north of the switch. It was immediately started southward, and a few seconds later, while moving at a speed variously estimated as from 5 to 12 miles per hour, it was struck by No. 293 at a point 672 feet north of the north siding-switch.

No. 293, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 4339, 4337, and 4343, coupled in multiple-unit control, 49 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Guion, 13.44 miles north of O'Neal, at 9:45 a. m., 45 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour it struck the motor-car.

No. 293 stopped with the front end of the locomotive approximately 2,520 feet south of the point of accident. Appurtenances of the front end of the locomotive were slightly damaged. The track motor-car, which was not derailed, was moved southward to the point at which the locomotive stopped. It was considerably damaged.

The section foreman was killed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10 35 a. m.

Track motor-car C-19 is of the belt-drive type and is powered by a 1-cylinder 8 to 13 horsepower engine. It has four-wheel brakes with metal brake shoes and is equipped with a canvas windshield at the front end. It weighs 975 pounds and has seating capacity for eight persons.

The Diesel-electric units of No. 293 were of the road-switcher type.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 6.6 trains.

### Discussion

The investigation disclosed that before leaving Batesville on the day of the accident the section foreman obtained from the foreman of an extra maintenance force information as to the time two north-bound trains were expected to move over the territory. This information had been obtained orally from the operator. The section foreman did not obtain a line-up of train movements from the operator or the train dispatcher. The members of the section force said that the foreman did not mention train movements to them until they were about to leave the siding at O'Neal. He then told them that they would set the track motor-car off at the motor-car set-off north of the north siding-switch and work at that point until No. 293 passed, but he did not tell them what time he expected the train to pass. No. 293 is due to leave Guion at 9 a. m. and O'Neal at 9:45 a. m. The foreman did not use the portable telephone with which the track motor-car was equipped or either of two telephones located adjacent to the siding to obtain information as to the location of No. 293. As the track motor-car was closely approaching the motor-car set-off the occupants saw No. 293 approaching at a distance of approximately 900 feet. The foreman immediately stopped the car and instructed the sectionmen to push the car southward to start it in the opposite direction. The

car started immediately. Four of the sectionmen boarded the car, and then warned the foreman and jumped off when they saw that a collision would occur. A member of the force estimated that the car was moving at a speed of 5 miles per hour when it was struck by the locomotive.

The flaman of an extra maintenance force which was performing service south of the siding was in the vicinity of the north siding-switch when the track motor-car departed northward. He said that immediately before it passed out of his view on the curve north of the siding he heard No. 293 approaching, and he made an unsuccessful attempt to attract the attention of members of the section force. Apparently because of a wind which was blowing from the south and the noise of the engine of the track motor-car members of the section force could not hear the approaching train before it came into view.

As No. 293 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 45 miles per hour, as estimated by members of the crew. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the control compartment of the first Diesel-electric unit, the conductor was on the second unit, and the front brakeman and the swing brakeman were on the rear unit. The flaman was in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer said that he had sounded the pneumatic horn at points where the view was obscured by curves and that it was being sounded on the curve north of the point of accident when the fireman saw the track motor-car and called a warning. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the collision occurred before the speed of the train was materially reduced. The fireman estimated that the track motor-car was moving at a speed of 11 or 12 miles per hour when it was struck by the locomotive.

In tests made after the accident occurred it was found that because of track curvature and vegetation adjacent to the track the sight distance between opposing movements in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident was restricted to a distance of approximately 1,000 feet.

The rules governing the operation of track motor-cars in this territory provide that train dispatchers will issue complete and definite information on trains for use of maintenance-of-way foremen in going to and returning from work. Line-ups containing this positive information are



designated by the symbol "PX." The rules also provide that as often as necessary foremen must, when practicable, secure in writing information showing the approximate arrival time of trains. This latter information is for use only in planning work in such a way as to minimize delays to traffic, and is not to be used as authority for a track motor-car to occupy the main track. Except when moving on the information contained in a PX line-up when going to or returning from work, the operators of track motor-cars are required to expect trains to run at any time and to protect their cars with the prescribed signals when necessary. In the instant case the section foreman did not obtain a PX line-up and apparently obtained no other information concerning the movement of No. 293, and from information obtained during this investigation it appears that he may have operated his track motor-car in the same manner on previous occasions.

In this line PX line-ups are issued by the train dispatcher at approximately 7:30 a. m. daily except Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Between 7 a. m. and 8 a. m. each day the operator at Batesville is required to deliver train orders to a train at a point a considerable distance from the station. There is a train dispatcher's telephone at the point at which the orders are delivered, and if the operator is at this point and is not otherwise engaged at the time a PX line-up is issued he makes copies. These copies are placed on a counter at the station where they are available to any track motor-car operator who desires one. No record is kept of the employees who obtain copies. According to the dispatcher's record of PX line-ups issued, the operator at Batesville acknowledged receipt of only nine of these line-ups from September 1, 1955, through October 6, 1955. The regularly assigned operator at Batesville said that the section foreman and others had requested information concerning train movements from time to time but these requests had not been frequent. The operator keeps no record of the line-ups which he receives and delivers. This operator was on his vacation at the time of the accident. The operator who was on duty said that he did not copy the PX line-up which was issued at 7:30 a. m. on the day of the accident and that he did not see or communicate with the section foreman.

During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 62 collisions, including the present case, in which track motor-cars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 94 persons and the injury of 180 persons.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-first day of November, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SIL)

HAROLD D. MCCOY,

Secretary.