

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3422  
MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR ROHWER, ARK., ON  
AUGUST 13, 1951

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SUMMARY

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Date: August 13, 1951

Railroad: Missouri Pacific

Location: Rohwer, Ark.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car : Freight train  
C-1122 and  
trailer

Train number: : 365

Engine numbers: : Diesel-electric  
units 320A and  
319A

Consist: ; 52 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 2° curve; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 8 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed

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

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3422

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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October 25, 1951

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Accident near Rohwer, Ark., on August 13, 1951, caused by  
failure to provide adequate protection for the movement  
of a track motor-car.

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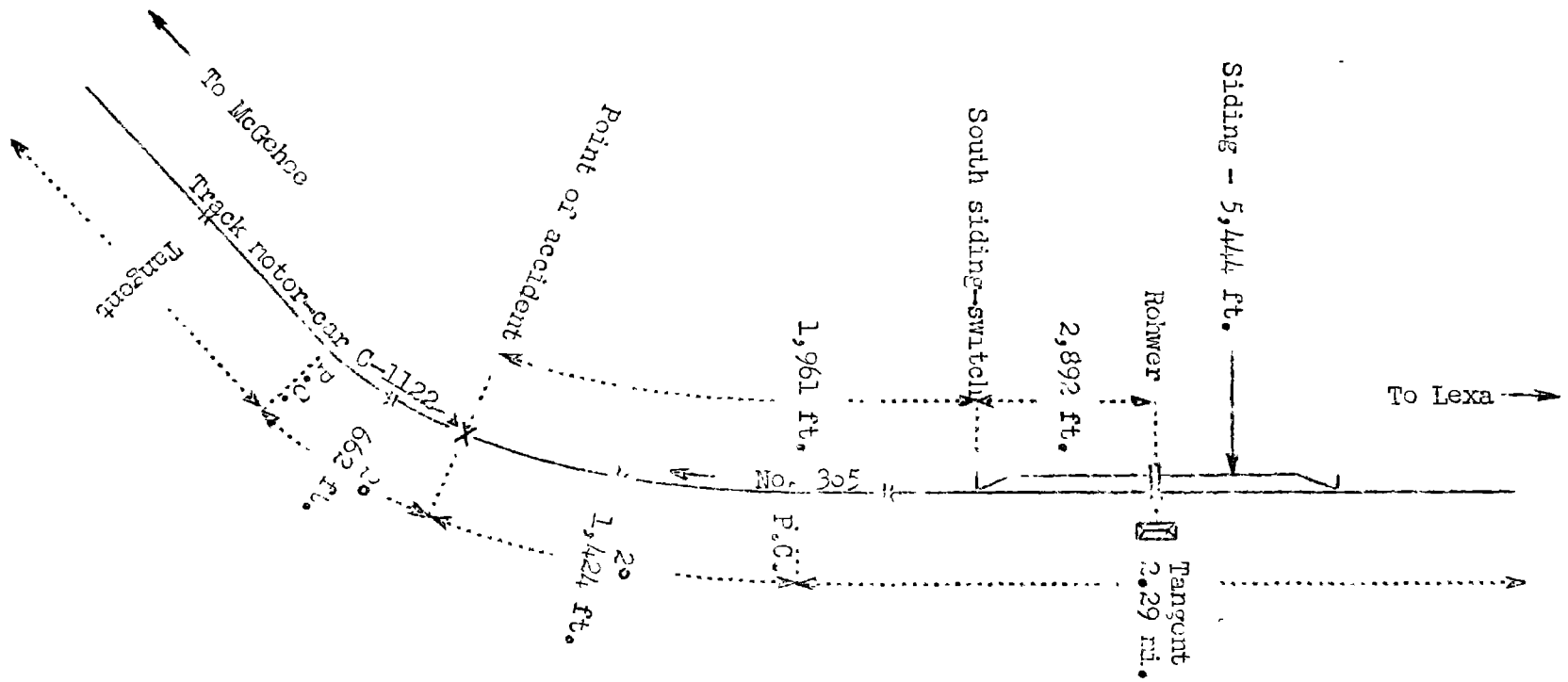
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 13, 1951, there was a head-end collision  
between a track motor-car and a freight train on the Missouri  
Pacific Railroad near Rohwer, Ark., which resulted in the  
death of one maintenance-of-way employee.

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<sup>1</sup>  
Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and  
disposition.



o	Lexa, Ark.
	61.51 mi.
o	Wabson
	9.41 mi.
o	Rohwer
	0.02 mi.
Z	Point of accident
	2.15 mi.
o	McGehee
	5.42 mi.
o	McGehee, Ark.

Report No. 3422  
 Missouri Pacific Railroad  
 Rohwer, Ark.  
 August 13, 1951

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Memphis Division extending between McGehee and Lexa, Ark., 82.56 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 Rohwer, 11.64 miles north of McGehee, a siding 5,444 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The south siding-switch is 2,892 feet south of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 10.72 miles north of McGehee and 1,961 feet south of the south siding-switch at Rohwer. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent several miles in length and a 2° curve to the left 662 feet to the point of accident and 1,424 feet northward. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 2.29 miles in length and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is level at the point of accident.

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

14. Engine Horn or 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. \* \* \*

This signal must also be frequently sounded to warn trackmen and other employes when view is restricted by \* \* \* obscure curves \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Rules and Regulations for the Maintenance of Way and Structures read in part as follows:

143. Speed.--The speed of motor cars must not exceed that at which the cars can be stopped within the limit of safety, and must not at any time exceed the speed given in the following table \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Gang cars with Trailers	15 miles per hour.
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\* \* \*

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 or other cars. Alertness and full use of eyes and ears are important.

(b) Operation in Fog, Storm, or at Night.--When necessary to operate car \* \* \* where the view is obstructed in any way \* \* \* special care must be used, and if conditions require, must proceed only under flag protection. In case of doubt or uncertainty, the safe course must be taken.

(c) Train Information.--Upon going to work and as often as necessary thereafter, foreman and other operators of cars shall, when practicable, secure from telegrapher in writing, information showing the approximate time of arrival at the station at which information is secured, of each train moving at that time which may arrive within the following three hours.

This information is for use in planning work in such a 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.

In territory designated by the Superintendent, where curves may cause excessive delay to operation of cars, special instructions may be issued providing for the furnishing of complete and definite information on trains, to be used by foreman in going to and returning from work. Such information, while positive with reference to trains, does not relieve foreman and others from using care and caution necessary for safety by use of eyes and ears, observance of speed restrictions, and other rules to prevent collision with track cars, obstructions, vehicles at highway crossings, and engines or cars within yard limits.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 40 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Track motor-car C-1122, occupied by a section foreman and four sectionmen, departed north-bound from McGehee about 7:15 a. m. At McArthur, 5.59 miles north of McGehee, an empty trailer was attached to the track motor-car. The track motor-car then proceeded northward and was stopped at a point 1,961 feet south of the south siding-switch at Rohwer. It was struck by No. 365 before it could be removed from the track.

No. 365, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 320A and 319A, coupled in multiple-unit control, 52 cars and a caboose. This train passed Watson, the last open office, 9.41 miles north of Rohwer, at 7:45 a. m., 3 hours 35 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of about 30 miles per hour it struck track motor-car C-1122.

The track motor-car and the trailer were demolished. The track motor-car stopped 36 feet east of the track and 46 feet south of the point of accident. The trailer stopped 9.2 feet east of the track and 132 feet south of the point of accident. No. 365 stopped with the front of the train 1,642 feet south of the point of accident. The front of the locomotive was slightly damaged.

The section foreman was killed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8 a. m.

Track motor-car C-1122 was of the 4-wheel belt-drive type, and was powered by an 8-13 horse-power gasoline motor. It was equipped with 4-wheel brakes and with rail skids. It weighed 935 pounds and had seating capacity for eight persons. The trailer was of the 4-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 10 trains.

### Discussion

The investigation disclosed that it was customary for the train dispatcher to issue a line-up to the operator at McGehee about 5 a. m. each day. These line-ups were for the use of the yardmaster, the engine-house foreman, and other interested employees, and contained information as to the anticipated time of arrival at McGehee of trains which were expected to arrive within the next few hours. The operator at McGehee said that the section foreman at McGehee usually obtained one of these line-ups each morning. When the operators of track motor-cars requested additional line-ups of anticipated train movements, they were obtained from the train dispatcher, but the operator did not remember that the section foreman had requested a line-up other than the one which was customarily issued about 5 a. m.

About 6:15 a. m. on the day of the accident the section foreman entered the yard office at McGehee and obtained a copy of the line-up which had been issued that morning. This line-up contained the information that No. 365 was expected to arrive at McGehee at 8:30 a. m. The section foreman inquired whether there was any change in the anticipated time of arrival of No. 365. Both the operator and the yardmaster informed him that No. 365 was expected to arrive at McGehee about 7:50 a. m. The section foreman then left the yard office, and, with four sectionmen, departed from McGehee on the track motor-car about 7:15 a. m. en route to Rohwer. A trailer was attached to the track motor-car at McArthur. The section force removed the cars from the track a short distance north of McArthur to permit a south-bound track motor-car to pass. They then replaced the cars on the track and proceeded northward. The sectionmen said that as they departed northward the section foreman consulted the line-up which he had received at McGehee and remarked that No. 365 was expected to arrive at McGehee at 8:30 a. m. As the track motor-car was approaching Rohwer the speed was about 15 miles per hour. When it was about 2,280 feet south of the south siding-switch the sectionmen observed that No. 365 was passing the switch. They warned the foreman,



and he immediately applied the brake but did not disengage the motor. The track motor-car was stopped within a distance of about 320 feet. The section force then uncoupled the trailer and attempted to remove the track motor-car from the track. Because the motor had not been disengaged, the wheels of the track motor-car did not turn freely and they were unable to move it far enough to clear the track in time to avert the accident. The sectionmen said that the foreman's usual procedure in stopping the track motor-car was to disengage the motor and then apply the brake, but on this occasion he appeared to be startled when they warned him of the approaching train and, instead of disengaging the motor, he stalled the motor and stopped the track motor-car by the use of the brake. They thought that if the track motor-car had been stopped in the usual manner, they could have removed it from the track before it was struck. They said they did not hear the sound of the pneumatic horn of No. 365 until after the track motor-car was stopped.

As No. 365 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 40 miles per hour. The members of the crew had received no information that the track ahead was occupied by a track motor-car. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive, the front brakeman was in the control compartment at the rear of the locomotive, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly. The enginemen said that the grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded as the train passed Rohwer and was repeated after the train passed the south siding-switch. As the locomotive entered the curve on which the accident occurred the enginemen observed several men on or near the track ahead. Because of vegetation along the track the enginemen were unable to see the track motor-car, and they assumed that the men were working on the track. When the locomotive reached a point 350 or 400 feet farther southward, the enginemen observed that the men were attempting to remove a track motor-car from the track. The engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a warning on the pneumatic horn. He estimated that the speed of the train had been reduced to about 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The rules of this carrier require that the operators of track motor-cars exercise care to avoid collisions with trains or other track motor-cars. They must expect trains to run at any time without notice, and must operate track motor-cars with the caution necessary to insure safety. The rules also provide that the operators of track motor-cars shall, upon going to work and as often as necessary thereafter, obtain information from telegraphers as to the approximate time of arrival of each train which may arrive within the following 3 hours. In the instant case the section foreman obtained a line-up of trains en route to McGehee which contained the information that No. 365 was expected to reach McGehee at 8:30 a. m. He also obtained oral information that No. 365 would reach McGehee about 7:50 a. m. From the remark which he made to the sectionmen between McArthur and Rohwer, it appears that he overlooked the fact that No. 365 would reach McGehee earlier than the time stated in the line-up. Although the information contained in the line-up may have caused him to believe that the track motor-car could reach Rohwer before No. 365 passed that point, the rules required that he provide the same degree of protection when he had a line-up as when he did not have one. Line-ups are issued as information only and confer no authority over trains or other track motor-cars. They do not relieve the operator of a track motor-car from responsibility for collision. Train dispatchers and the members of train crews are not informed when a track motor-car is occupying the main track, and track motor-car operators are not informed when another track motor-car is occupying the main track.

This carrier's Rules and Regulations for the Maintenance of Way and Structures contain rules which provide that in territory designated by the superintendent, where curves may cause excessive delay in the operation of track motor-cars, special instructions may be issued providing for the furnishing of complete and definite information on trains to the operators of track motor-cars. Such special instructions had not been issued in the territory in which this accident occurred.

Since January 1, 1944, the Commission has investigated 34 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 65 persons and the injury of 106 persons.

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 Missouri Pacific Railroad Company provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of October, 1951.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.