

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3765

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

SHERIDAN LAKE, COLO

JULY 7, 1957

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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DATE	July 7, 1957	
RAILROAD	Missouri Pacific	
LOCATION	Sheridan Lake, Colo	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Passenger train	Motor-truck
TRAIN NUMBER	11	
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER	Diesel-electric units 7013A, 8026, and 8022	
CONSIST	12 cars	
ESTIMATED SPEEDS	79 m p h	Undetermined
OPERATION	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system	
TRACK	Single, tangent, 0.62 percent descending grade westward	
HIGHWAY	Tangent, crosses track at angle of 81°30', 3.75 percent ascending grade northward	
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	4:59 a m	
CASUALTIES	3 killed	
CAUSE	Motor-truck occupying rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Report No 3765

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

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

November 8, 1957

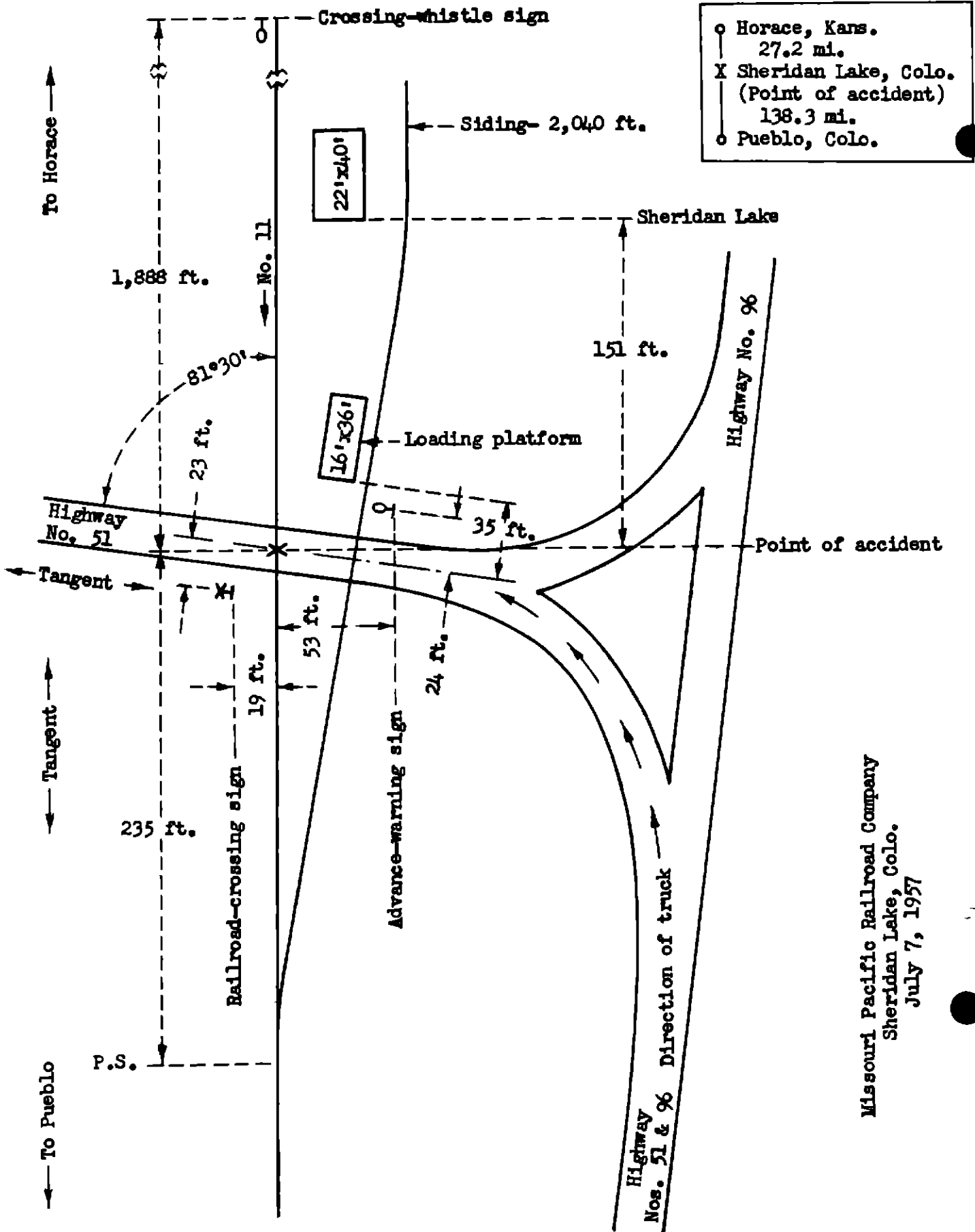
Accident at Sheridan Lake, Colo , on July 7, 1957, caused by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

TUGGLE, Commissioner

On July 7, 1957, there was a collision between a freight train on the Missouri Pacific Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing at Sheridan Lake, Colo , which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck and two train-service employees

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



o Horace, Kans.
 27.2 mi.
 X Sheridan Lake, Colo.
 (Point of accident)
 138.3 mi.
 o Pueblo, Colo.

Missouri Pacific Railroad Company
 Sheridan Lake, Colo.
 July 7, 1957

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Colorado Division extending between Horace, Kans , and Pueblo, Colo , 165.5 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 27.2 miles west of Horace and 151 feet west of the station at Sheridan Lake, Colo , where the railroad is crossed at grade by Colorado State Highway No. 51. In the vicinity of the point of accident Colorado State Highway No. 96 parallels the main track on the south. West of Sheridan Lake, Highway No. 51 is combined with Highway No. 96. At Sheridan Lake, Highway No. 51 diverges to the left from the combined highway and crosses the main track at an angle of 81°31'. A siding 2,040 feet in length parallels the main track on the south and is located between the main track and Highway No. 96. The west switch of this siding is located 235 feet west of the center-line of the crossing. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of several miles immediately east of the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. The grade for west-bound trains is 0.62 percent descending at the point of accident.

Highway No. 51 is surfaced with gravel to a width of 20 feet on each side of the crossing. Planking is laid along each side of each rail at the crossing. The portions of the highway extending throughout a distance of 2 feet south of the south planking and between the inside planking are surfaced with bituminous material. From the south on Highway No. 51 there are, in succession, a curve to the left approximately 285 feet in length, and a tangent approximately 35 feet to the crossing and a considerable distance northward. From the south the grade is, successively, 0.80 percent ascending a distance of 100 feet, 6.03 percent ascending 68 feet, and 3.75 percent ascending 32 feet to the center-line of the main track.

A loading platform 16 feet in width and 36 feet in length and the station 22 feet in width and 40 feet in length are located between the main track and the siding. The west end of the loading platform is located 35 feet east of the center-line of the highway.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign is located 24 feet east of the center-line of the highway and 53 feet south of the main track. It bears one vertical and two horizontal lines and the letters "RR" in black. A standard crossbuck railroad-crossing sign is located 23 feet west of the center-line of the highway and 19 feet north of the main track. This sign is mounted on a mast approximately 9 feet 8 inches above the level of the highway and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background. A sign bearing the numeral "2" and the word "TRACKS" in black on a white background is mounted on the mast immediately below the crossbuck. A crossing-whistle sign for west-bound trains is located 1,888 feet east of the crossing.

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

14. Engine Horn or Whistle Signals —The horn or whistle must be sounded as prescribed by rule or law * * *

* * *

NOTE —The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds, "—" for longer sounds * * *

SOUND	INDICATION

(1) -- - o ---	Approaching public crossing at grade *** To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car

17 Headlights — The standard white headlight must be displayed brightly to the front of every train by day and by night	

30 Ringing Bell — *** the engine bell must be rung *** while approaching and passing public crossings at grade, ***	

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved in the accident was 79 miles per hour

Description of Accident

No 11, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of diesel-electric units 7013A, 8026, and 8022, coupled in multiple-unit control, one baggage-mail car, one mail car, one coach, one coach-grill car, one diner-bar car, one coach, one coach-dome car, one diner-lounge car, and four Pullman cars, in the order named. All cars were of lightweight steel construction and were equipped with tightlock couplers. This train departed from Horace, Kan., the last open office, at 4:34 a. m., 18 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 79 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck at a point 151 feet west of Sheridan Lake station where the railroad is crossed at grade by State Highway No. 51.

The vehicle involved was a flat-bed motor-truck. It bore Colorado State license No. 29 1334 KS. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Colorado State Chauffeur's license No. CD-17786. The motor-truck was a 1948 2-ton International powered by a 6-cylinder gasoline engine. It was equipped with a 5-speed transmission, dual wheels at the rear, and hydraulic brakes supplemented by a vacuum booster. It was provided with an enclosed cab. The bed was 7 feet 2 inches in width and 14 feet in length. The overall length of the vehicle was 23 feet. At the time of the accident an International Harvester Farmall tractor weighing 3,875 pounds and 48 quart cans of motor oil were loaded on the truck. The gasoline tank of the tractor contained about three gallons of gasoline and the transmission contained about six gallons of oil. The gross weight of the motor-truck was approximately five tons. This vehicle was moving northward on Highway No. 51 at slow speed when it entered the crossing and was struck by No. 11.

No. 11 stopped with the front end of the locomotive 3,983 feet west of the crossing. No separations occurred between units of the train and none of the equipment was derailed. The front-end door and the front door of the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit were forced inward by the collision. As a result, the gasoline tank of the tractor, the transmission, a tractor wheel with its tire, and the cans of motor oil were permitted to enter the front portion of the unit. An explosion occurred and the combustible materials became ignited. Several minor explosions occurred in the front portion of the unit after the train stopped. The first diesel-electric unit was badly damaged by the fire. The second and third diesel-electric units were slightly damaged.

The motor-truck was struck near the center of the body. It was destroyed. The cab of the vehicle stopped 37 feet west of the point of accident and 8 feet north of the main track.

The engineer and the fireman of No. 11, and the driver of the motor-truck were killed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident which occurred about 4:59 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 7.17 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 6 a. m., July 9, 1957, 187 automobiles, 125 motor-trucks, and 82 pedestrians passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 11 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 79 miles per hour, as estimated by the conductor. The enginemen were in the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit and the members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The flagman said that while the train was proceeding on a curve east of Sheridan Lake he observed that the headlight and the oscillating white headlight were lighted. Witnesses said that the engineer sounded the grade-crossing whistle signal when the train was approaching the crossing. Members of the train crew said that the brakes became applied in emergency immediately before the collision occurred. Examination of the locomotive after the accident occurred disclosed that the automatic brake-valve handle was in emergency position and that the bell-ringer valve was in open position.

The owner of the motor-truck involved in the accident said that he conversed with the driver of the truck shortly before the accident occurred and that he appeared to be in good physical condition. A witness to the accident was standing about 100 feet north of the crossing. She said that she heard the sound of the pneumatic horn of No. 11 and that she attempted to warn the driver of the truck by signaling with her arm. She said that the truck was moving at a slow speed approaching the crossing and that it entered the crossing in low gear.

As the vehicle involved in the accident proceeded northward on Highway No. 51, the driver's view of No. 11 was obstructed by the loading platform, the station, and cars standing on the siding. At a point 54 feet south of the crossing the approaching train could be seen only throughout a distance of 221 feet immediately east of the crossing.

Cause

This accident was caused by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighth

day of November, 1957

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary

Interstate Commerce Commission
Washington 25, D C
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
RETURN AFTER FIVE DAYS

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION