INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3760

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

AT SINTON, TEX., ON

JUNE 25, 1957

SUMMARY

Date:	June 25, 1957	
Railroad:	Missouri Pacific	
Location	Sinton, Tex.	
Kind of accident:	Collision	
Equipment involved:	Freight train	: Motor-truck
Train number:	360	
Locomotive number:	Diesel-electric units 534A and 543A	
Consist:	41 cars, caboose	
Estimated speeds:	35-45 m. p. h.	: 15-20 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; level	
Highway:	Tangent; crosses track at an angle of 62° 55'; level	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	10:05 a. m.	
Casualties:	2 killed; 1 injured	
Cause:	Motor-truck occupying rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3760

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

MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

August 23, 1957

Accident at Sinton, Tex., on June 25, 1957, caused by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

TUGGLE, Commissioner:

On June 25, 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 Sinton, Tex., which resulted in the death of 2 train-service employees, and the injury of 1 train-service employee.

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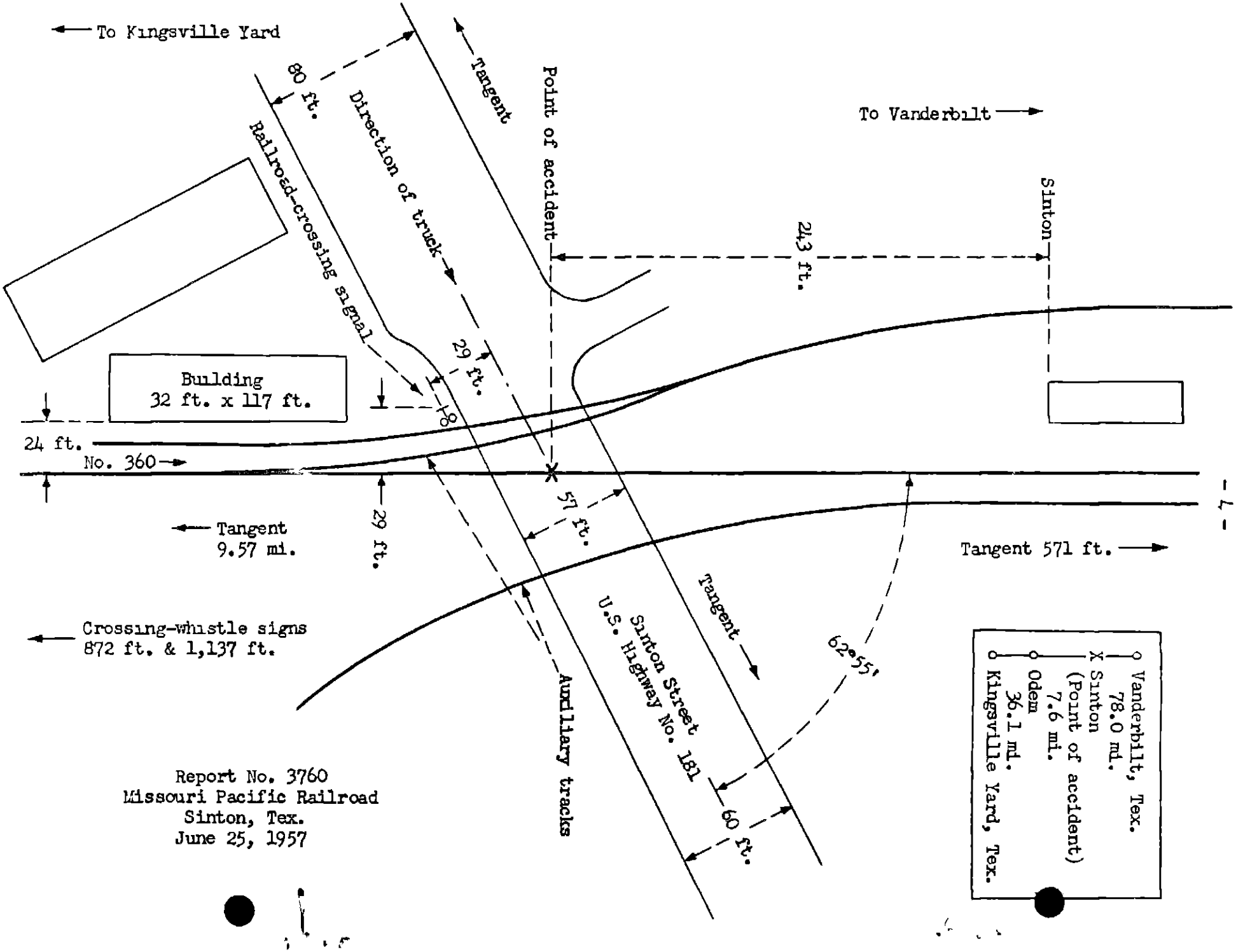
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Tuggle for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 3760
Missouri Pacific Railroad
Sinton, Tex.
June 25, 1957

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. 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. The accident occurred on the main track within the corporate limits of Sinton, 43.7 miles north of Kingsville Yard, at a point 243 feet south of the station, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Sinton Street (U. S. Highway No. 181.) At this point Sinton Street also crosses three auxiliary tracks located, respectively, 30 feet west, 19 feet west, and 46 feet east of the main track. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 9.57 miles immediately south of the point of accident and 571 feet northward. The grade is level at the point of accident.

The northeast angle of the intersection of Sinton Street and the railroad is 62° 55'. Sinton Street is surfaced with bituminous material to a width of 80 feet west of the crossing and to a width of 60 feet east of the crossing. The crossing is 57 feet in width. Planking is laid along the outside of each rail and between the rails of the main track throughout the width of the crossing. The street is tangent throughout a considerable distance on each side of the crossing. The grade for east-bound vehicles is 2.00 percent ascending a distance of 100 feet to the intersection of the street and main track, and 1.00 percent descending a distance of 200 feet eastward.

There are several buildings along the south side of Sinton Street west of the crossing. The building nearest to the tracks is 32 feet in width and 117 feet in length. The east side of the building is approximately 24 feet west of the center-line of the main track.

A railroad-crossing signal of the flashing-light type is located 29 feet west of the center-line of the main track and 29 feet south of the center-line of the street. This signal consists of a standard cross buck mounted on a mast 11 feet above the level of the street. It bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background. Two hooded red lamps are mounted back-to-back at each end of a horizontal bar which is attached to the mast at a point approximately 7.5 feet above the street level. A sign which bears the numeral "4" and the word "TRACKS" in black letters on a white background is mounted on the mast above the lamps, and a sign which bears the words "STOP ON RED SIGNAL" in white

reflectorized letters on a black background is mounted on the mast below the lamps. The warning aspect is displayed by the alternate illumination of the lamps when a north-bound train occupies any portion of the track throughout a distance of 2,038 feet immediately south of the crossing. A similar signal is located in the northeast angle of the intersection. Crossing-whistle signs for north-bound trains are located 872 feet and 1,137 feet south of the crossing.

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. (Standard sign will designate point at which signal must begin.) To be prolonged or repeated until crossing is occupied by engine or car.
* * *	

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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 * * *

Motor vehicle laws of the State of Texas read in part as follows:

Sec. 86. Obedience to signal indicating approach of train.--Whenever any person driving a vehicle approaches a railroad grade crossing, the driver of such vehicle shall stop within fifty (50) feet but not less than fifteen (15) feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and shall not proceed until he can do so safely when:

(a) A clearly visible electric or mechanical signal device gives warning of the immediate approach of a train;

* * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 49 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 360, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of diesel-electric units 534A and 543A, coupled in multiple-unit control, 41 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Kingsville Yard at 8:45 a. m., 15 minutes late, passed Odem, 7.6 miles south of Sinton, the last open office, at 9:56 a. m., 26 minutes late and while moving at a speed of between 35 and 45 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck at Sinton Street in Sinton.

The vehicle involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned by the Texas Consolidated Transport Company, Corpus Christi, Tex. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Texas Commercial Operator's license No. 64866. The tractor was a 1956 model White. It was powered by a gasoline engine and was equipped with an enclosed cab. It bore Texas license No. 7X6653. The semi-trailer was a 1956 model Heil four-compartment tank with a capacity of 6,700 gallons. It bore Texas license No. 7K1874. Both the tractor and semi-trailer were equipped with air brakes. At the time of the accident the semi-trailer was loaded with 6,700 gallons of gasoline. The total length of the vehicle was 45 feet. This vehicle was moving eastward on Sinton Street at an estimated speed of 15 to 20 miles per hour when it entered the crossing and was struck by the locomotive of No. 360.

The locomotive struck the semi-trailer near the rear end. The semi-trailer was separated from the tractor, and it stopped approximately 50 feet east of the center-line of the track and 60 feet north of the center-line of the highway. The tractor was not overturned. The tank of the semi-trailer was ruptured, and gasoline was spilled over the diesel-electric units. There was no fire at the point of collision. When the locomotive reached a point about 460 feet north of the crossing there was an explosion in both diesel-electric units. The train stopped with the front of the locomotive 2,546 feet north of the point of accident. No equipment of the train was derailed. The diesel-electric units were heavily damaged.

The engineer and the fireman of No. 360 were killed. The front brakeman was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:05 a. m.

During a 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 9 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 10:30 a. m., June 28, 1957, 7,325 automobiles, 1,480 motor-trucks and 15 buses passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 360 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in the control compartment at the front of the first diesel-electric unit, the front brakeman was in the control compartment of the second diesel-electric unit, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The front brakeman and several witnesses stated that the grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded for the crossing at Sinton Street and that the signal was prolonged until the collision occurred. The front brakeman did not see the motor-truck before the accident occurred. Inspection of the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit disclosed that the headlight switch was in "ON BRIGHT" position. The surviving members of the crew estimated the speed of the train was between 35 and 45 miles per hour when the accident occurred.

When the locomotive of No. 360 struck the rear end of the semi-trailer the tank was ruptured in several places, and gasoline was spilled over the diesel-electric units and the street. Several seconds after the collision occurred, and while the train was still moving, there was an explosion within the diesel-electric units due to an accumulation of gasoline vapors. Doors, side sheathing, windows, and internal parts were blown off and broken in both units by this explosion. The station and several nearby buildings were damaged by flying parts.

Several witnesses to the accident said that the flashing-light warning signals at the crossing were in operation as the train approached. The agent at Sinton, who was in the vicinity of the station, said the truck approached the crossing at a speed which he estimated to be 15 to 20 miles per hour. He said that the driver made no apparent attempt to stop the truck before the accident occurred.

The driver of the motor-truck was not available for questioning during this investigation.

The warning signals at the crossing had been last inspected at 8:00 a. m., June 17, 1957, and had been found to function properly. The signal in the northeast angle of the intersection was demolished in the accident. After the accident occurred the signal in the southwest angle of the intersection was inspected and was found to function properly.

As an east-bound vehicle approaches the crossing, the driver's view of an approaching north-bound train is considerably restricted by the buildings on the south side of the street. From points 200 feet, 100 feet, and 25 feet west of the main track, the track south of the crossing is visible throughout distances of 98 feet, 125 feet, and 1,400 feet, respectively. From a point 19 feet west of the center-line of the main track, the view of the track south of the crossing is unobstructed.

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 twenty-third day of August, 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