

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2807
THE MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS RAILROAD
COMPANY OF TEXAS

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR BASTROP, TEX., ON
JUNE 23, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Missouri-Kansas-Texas of Texas
Date: June 23, 1944
Location: Bastrop, Tex.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Passenger-equipment
Train numbers: 25 : Passenger Extra 705
North
Engine numbers: 408 : 705
Consist: 8 cars : 17 cars
Estimated speed: 30 m. p. h. : 5 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; level
Weather: Clear
Time: 7:23 a. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 66 injured
Cause: Lap of authority of two opposing
trains
Recommendation: That the Missouri-Kansas-Texas
Railroad Company of Texas
establish an adequate block
system on the line on which
this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2807

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

THE MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS RAILROAD COMPANY OF TEXAS

August 4, 1944.

Accident near Bastrop, Tex., on June 23, 1944, caused by
lap of authority of two opposing trains.

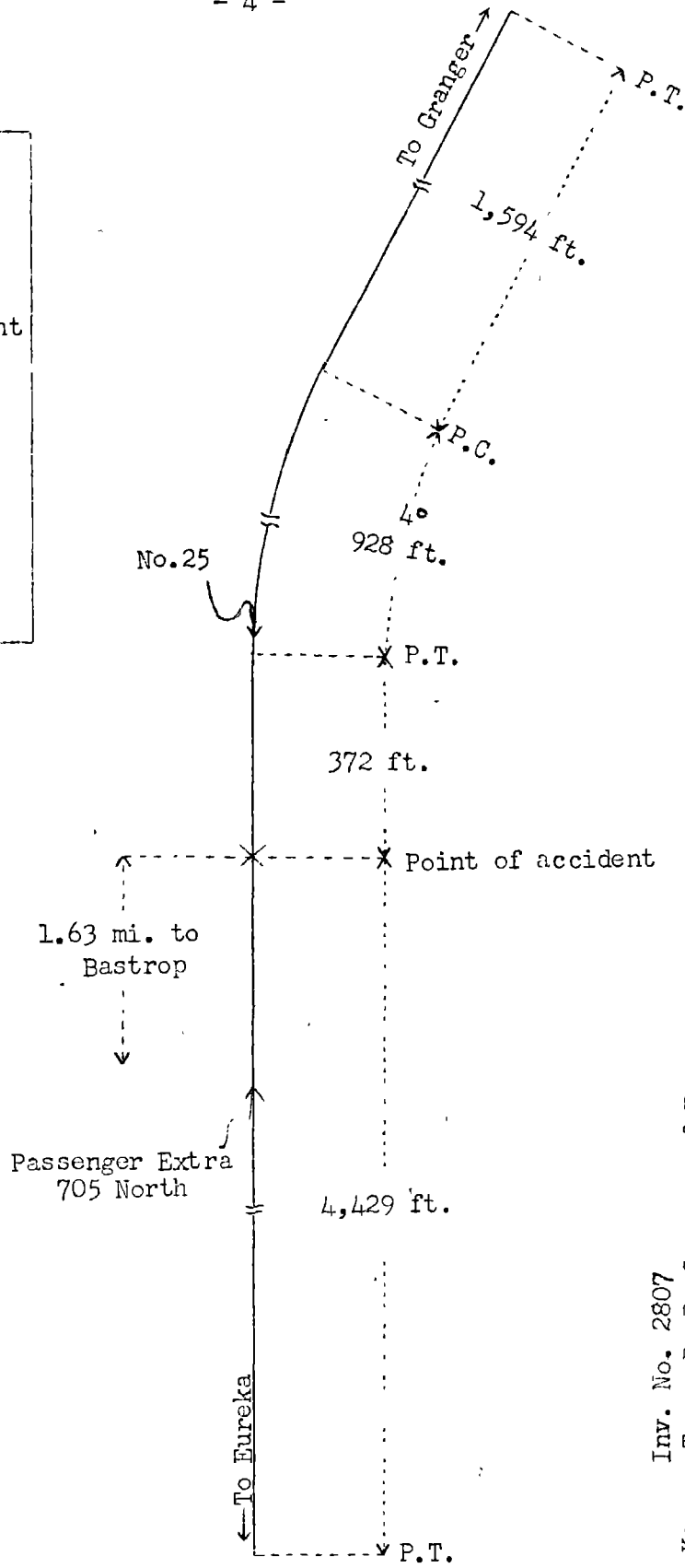
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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On June 23, 1944, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a passenger-equipment train on the line of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company of Texas near Bastrop, Tex., which resulted in the death of 1 train-service employee, and the injury of 54 passengers, 7 Pullman employees and 5 train-service employees.

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

Houston Division	o Waco, Tex.	62.60 mi.
	o Granger	38.90 mi.
	o Dunstan	5.17 mi.
	x Point of accident	1.63 mi.
	o Bastrop	15.60 mi.
	o Smithville	18.80 mi.
	o La Grange	35.80 mi.
	o Cat Spring	55.50 mi.
	o Eureka, Tex.	



Inv. No. 2807
 Missouri-Kansas-Texas R. R. Company of Texas
 Bastrop, Tex.
 June 23, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad designated as the Houston Division and extending northward from Eureka to Granger, Tex., 171.4 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 127.33 miles north of Eureka, at a point 1.63 miles north of the station at Bastrop. From the north there were, in succession, a tangent 1,594 feet in length, a 4° curve to the left 928 feet and a tangent 372 feet to the point of accident. From the south the track was tangent 4,429 feet to the point of accident. The grade was level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

SUPERIORITY OF TRAINS

71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by time-table.

* * *

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

205. Each train order must be written in full in a book provided for the purpose at the office of the Superintendent or Trainmaster; and with it recorded the names of those who have signed for the order; the time and the signals which show when and from what offices the order was repeated and the responses transmitted, and the train dispatcher's initials. These records must be made at once, and never from memory or memoranda.

206. * * *

When train orders are transmitted by telegraph, the train dispatcher must underscore each word and figure in the body of the order at the time it is repeated. When transmitting by telephone he must write the order as he transmits it and underscore as prescribed above.

* * *

209. Operators receiving train orders must write them in manifold during transmission and if they can not at one writing make the requisite number of copies must trace others from one of the copies first made, and repeat to the train dispatcher from the new copies each time additional copies are made.

* * *

210. When a train order has been transmitted, operators must, unless otherwise directed, repeat it at once, from the manifold copy in the succession in which the several offices have been addressed. Each operator receiving the order should observe whether the others repeat correctly. When the order has been repeated correctly by an operator, the response "complete" and the time, will be given by the Train Dispatcher. The operator receiving this response will then write on each copy the word 'complete,' the time, and his last name in full, * * *. When practicable "complete" should not be given until the several offices have repeated.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

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EXTRA TRAINS

* * *

(3) Engine 77 run extra leaving "A" on Thursday, February 17th as follows with right over all trains:

Leave "A" 11 30 P.M.

* * *

Arrive "F" 2 20 A.M.

This order may be varied by specifying the kind of extra and the particular trains over which the extra shall or shall not have right. Trains over which the extra is thus given right must clear the time of the extra ten minutes unless the order otherwise specifies, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train was 60 miles per hour and for the passenger-equipment train, 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Smithville, 15.6 miles south of Bastrop, the crew of Passenger Extra 705 North, a north-bound passenger-equipment train, received copies of train order No. 26 reading in part as follows:

Eng 705 run Psgr Extra leaving
Smithville on Friday June 23 as
follows with right over all trains
Leave Smithville 6 40 am * * *
Bastrop 7 12 'am * * *
arrive Waco 1 15 pm

Waco, a station on the San Antonio Division, was 108.3 miles north of Bastrop. Passenger Extra 705 consisted of engine 705 and 17 sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Smithville, the last open office, at 6:47 a. m., passed Bastrop at 7:18 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it collided with No. 25.

No. 25, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 408, one baggage-express car, one baggage-mail car, two coaches, one Pullman sleeping car, two tourist sleeping cars and one business car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. The crew of this train did not hold copies of train order No. 26. No. 25 departed from Dunstan, 6.8 miles north of Bastrop and the last open office, at 7:17 a. m., 1 hour 24 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with Passenger Extra 705 North at a point 1.63 miles north of Bastrop.

The engine of each train, the first three cars of No. 25 and the first car of Passenger Extra 705 North were derailed and considerably damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:23 a. m.

The fireman of No. 25 was killed. The engineer, the baggageman and the train porter of No. 25, and the engineer and the fireman of Passenger Extra 705 North were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 21.46 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line required that operators receiving a train order must write it during transmission on the prescribed form, then repeat it to the dispatcher in the succession in which their offices were addressed. Each operator receiving the order must observe whether the other operators repeat correctly. During repetition, the dispatcher must underscore in his train-order book each word and figure in the body of the order. The dispatcher and the operators concerned so understood.

The investigation disclosed that train order No. 26 was sent to the operator at Smithville for delivery to Passenger Extra 705 North, and to the operators at five other offices for delivery to other trains. The copies of the order addressed to trains at the five other offices and the entry in the dispatcher's train-order book included the words "with right over all trains except first-class trains," but the copies delivered to the crew of Passenger Extra 705 by the operator at Smithville did not include the words "except first-class trains." It was not intended that Passenger Extra 705 be given right over first-class trains, and the order was not sent to any office for delivery to No. 25, which was a south-bound first-class train. The dispatcher said that when he transmitted the order the words "except first-class trains" were included. The order was sent simultaneously to the operators at the various offices, and each operator repeated the order in full. The operators who checked the order when the operator at Smithville repeated it said that the operator at Smithville repeated the order in full and included the words "except first-class trains." The operator at Smithville said that he did not re-copy the order after it was repeated by him. He was reasonably sure that he repeated the order to the dispatcher and included the words "except first-class trains," but he did not have these four words written in the body of the order, and overlooked including them after the order was repeated. The error in the train order copied by the operator at Smithville resulted in a lap of authority of the trains involved, as Passenger Extra 705 was authorized to proceed with right over all trains, but the crew of No. 25 had no knowledge of the existence of this authority. These trains collided on the main track 1.63 miles north of Bastrop. Because of track curvature and the superstructure of a bridge in this vicinity, the members of the crew on the engine of each train were unable to see the other train more than a few hundred feet. Action to stop their respective trains was taken by the engineers, but the distance was not sufficient to avert the collision.

In addition to order No. 26, the crew of Passenger Extra 705 North received at Smithville order No. 38, which was

addressed to northward trains and the yardmaster. This order specified certain times that No. 25 would wait at four stations north of Smithville, but it did not state the train or trains for which No. 25 would wait. Considering the two orders together, the provisions contained in them provided a possibility of a doubt on the part of the crew of Passenger Extra 705 as to the correctness of order No. 26. However, in the past these employees had received orders which did not affect the authority of their train and which, for convenience, had been addressed to all trains in one direction instead of individual trains. They thought the fact that since order No. 38 was not specifically addressed to their train it was issued to confer authority on certain other trains.

In this territory trains were operated by timetable and train orders only. This carrier had an automatic block-signal system in operation between Cat Spring and La Grange, Tex., 35.8 miles, and between Granger and Waco, Tex., 62.6 miles. The accident occurred 36.03 miles north of the north end of the first-mentioned territory and 44.07 miles south of the south end of the latter. If an adequate block system had been in use in the territory involved, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously, and this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a lap of authority of two opposing trains.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company of Texas establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourth day of August, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.