INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3724

MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

AT SUTTON, OKLA., ON

DECEMBER 8, 1956

SUMMARY

Date:	December 8, 1956	
Railroad:	Missouri-Kansas-Texas	
Location:	Sutton, Okla.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Passenger
Train numbers:	281	: 26
Locomotive numbers:	Diesel-electric units 229C and 204B	: Diesel-electric unit 151A
Consists:	56 cars, caboose	: 4 cars
Estimated speeds:	2 m. p. h. in backward motion	: 20 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; level	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	3:15 p. m.	
Casualties:	14 injured	
Cause:	Train occupying main track on time of opposing superior train without adequate protection	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3724

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

MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS RAILROAD COMPANY

January 22, 1957

Accident at Sutton, Okla., on December 8, 1956, caused by a train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train without adequate protection.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

TUGGLE, Commissioner:

On December 8, 1956, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad at Sutton, Okla., which resulted in the injury of four passengers, two postal employees, one express messenger, one express messenger not on duty, three railroad employees not on duty, and three train-service employees.

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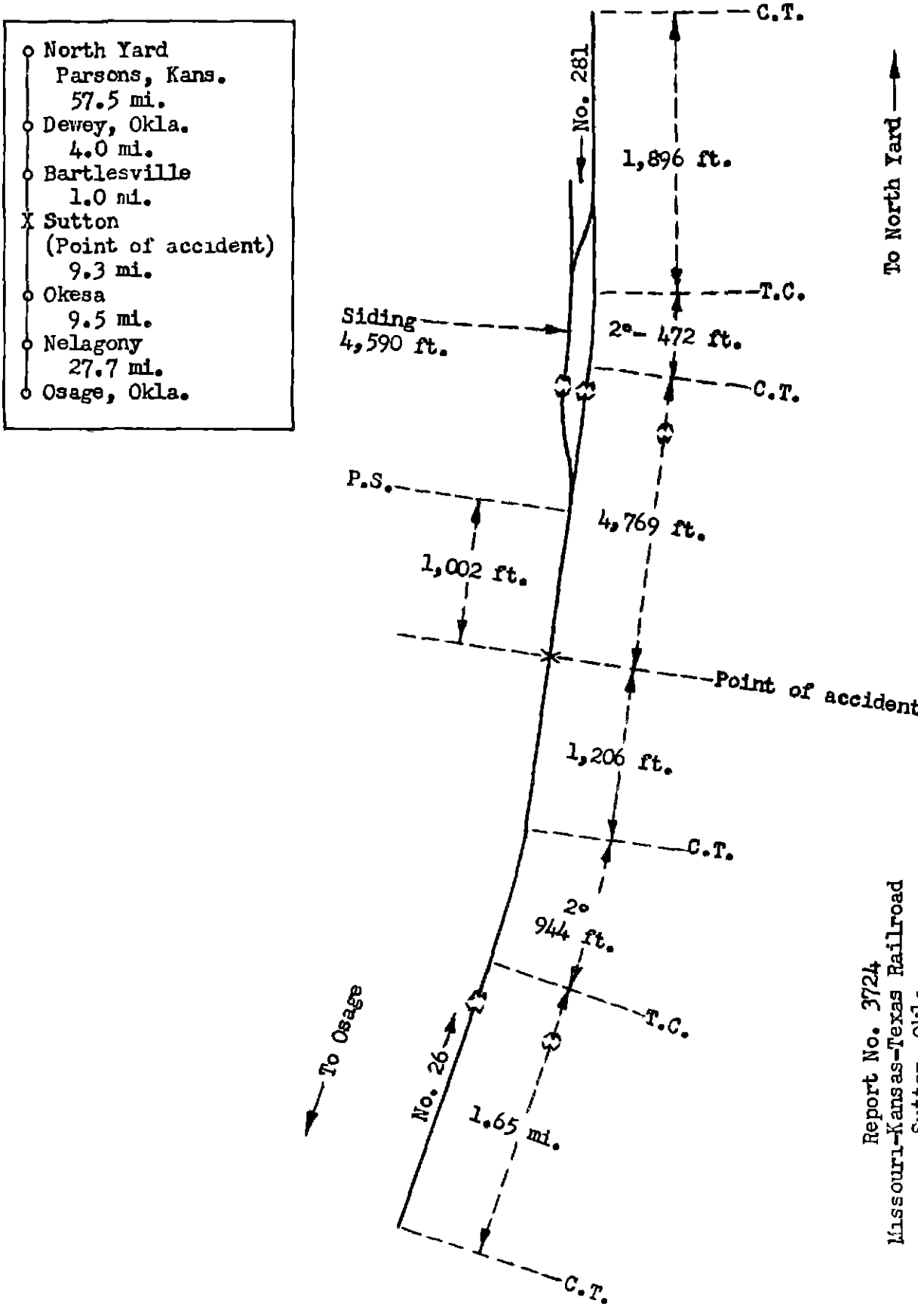
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Tuggle for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 3724
Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad
Sutton, Okla.
December 8, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division extending between North Yard, Parsons, Kans., and Osage, Okla., 109.0 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 Sutton, Okla., 62.5 miles south of North Yard, a siding 4,590 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 1,002 feet south of the south siding-switch at Sutton. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 1,896 feet in length, a 2° curve to the right 472 feet, and a tangent 4,769 feet to the point of accident and 1,206 feet southward. From the south there are, in succession, a tangent 1.65 miles in length, a 2° curve to the left 944 feet, and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade is level at the point of accident.

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

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

Right is conferred by train order; class and direction by timetable.

* * *

72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; trains of the second class are superior to those of the third; and so on.

87. Protection When Failure to Clear.--When an inferior train fails to clear a superior train by the time required by rule, it must be protected at that time as prescribed by Rule 99.

* * *

S-89. Clearing Time, Opposing Trains.--An inferior train must clear the time * * * of an opposing superior train not less than 5 minutes before the leaving time of the superior train.

99. Flagging Rule. * * *

When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go

back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes and, when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted red fusees. * * *

99 (b). When necessary, the front of the train must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99 by the forward trainman or by an engine man.

* * *

The maximum authorized speeds in the vicinity of the point of accident are 50 miles per hour for passenger trains and 40 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

No. 281, a south-bound third-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 229C and 204B, coupled in multiple-unit control, 56 cars, and a caboose. This train passed Bartlesville, Okla., 1.0 mile north of Sutton and the last open office, at 3:05 p. m., 5 hours 34 minutes late, according to the dispatcher's record of the movement of trains. It was stopped on the main track at Sutton, and the locomotive and the first 19 cars were detached and moved south of the south siding-switch. About 8 minutes later, as a northward movement was being started, the forward portion of the train was struck by No. 26. The accident occurred at a point 1,002 feet south of the south siding-switch.

No. 26, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 151A, two baggage cars, one baggage-mail car, and one chair car, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Nelagony, 18.8 miles south of Sutton and the last open office, at 2:52 p. m., 2 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of about 20 miles per hour it struck No. 281.

With the exception of the front wheels of the rear truck of the second car of No. 26, no equipment was derailed. The main frames of the first Diesel-electric unit of No. 281 and the Diesel-electric unit of No. 26 were buckled, and the units were considerably damaged. The couplers were broken, and separations occurred between the locomotive and the first car and between the second and third cars of No. 26. The third car was considerably damaged, and the other cars were somewhat damaged.

The engineer, the fireman, and the conductor of No. 26 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:15 p. m.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier provide that a train must clear the time of an opposing superior train not less than 5 minutes before the leaving time of the superior train. They also provide that when a train fails to clear a superior train by the time required by rule it must be protected at that time as prescribed by rule No. 99. No. 26 was due to leave Okesa, 9.3 miles south of Sutton, at 3:03 p. m., and to leave Sutton at 3:15 p. m. If No. 281 proceeded to Sutton to meet No. 26 it was required to clear the main track or be protected not later than 3:10 p. m., and if it moved beyond the north siding-switch it was required to be protected not later than 2:58 p. m.

Before No. 281 arrived at Sutton the crew set off cars and added cars to the train at Dewey, Okla., 5.0 miles north of Sutton. The train included 19 cars to be set off on the siding at Sutton. While the train was at Dewey the conductor told the train dispatcher that he would like to set the cars on the siding at Sutton, stop No. 26 at the south siding-switch, and instruct the crew of No. 26 to enter the siding and then back out after No. 281 passed on the main track. The dispatcher told him that there would be no objection to this arrangement. The conductor said he told the other members of the crew that No. 26 should be on time and that the movement should be made in this manner provided there was sufficient time to set the cars on the siding at Sutton before the arrival of No. 26. After the train was coupled at Dewey it was necessary to clear ice from the coupling of the air hose on one of the cars which had been added to the train, and the train departed from Dewey about 15 minutes later than the conductor had anticipated.

As No. 281 was approaching Sutton the enginemen, the front brakeman, and the flagman were on the locomotive. The conductor was in the caboose. The headlight was lighted. It is necessary for the crew of a south-bound train en route to Osage to operate a switch at a junction 2,019 feet north of the north siding-switch at Sutton, and after the rear end of the train passed this switch the conductor restored the switch to normal position and boarded the caboose. He said that he boarded the caboose at 2:59 p. m. He said that the speed was reduced when the front end of the train was in the vicinity of the north siding-switch at Sutton, and he assumed that the train was entering the siding. When the caboose reached the switch he saw that the train was on

the main track. He said that at this time the engineer made a brake application, and that the train stopped at 3:02 p. m. The employees on the locomotive said that they intended to enter the siding at the north switch to meet No. 26, but as the locomotive was approaching the switch they saw that the north end of the siding was blocked with cars. They had no previous knowledge that the siding was not clear. When they saw the cars, the engineer decided to proceed to the south switch, stop No. 26, and instruct the crew to enter the siding at that point. He also decided that there would be sufficient time to set the 19 cars in his train onto the siding before the arrival of No. 26, and he planned to do this in order to avoid delay. He stopped the train with the locomotive about 13 car-lengths beyond the south siding-switch. The employees on the locomotive said that the train stopped about 3:02 p. m. The flagman detached the first 19 cars from the rear portion of the train, and the engineer moved these cars clear of the switch. Rain had been falling and freezing, and the flagman spent 6 or 8 minutes in clearing ice from the switch lock and switch points before he could unlock and operate the switch. He said the forward portion of the train began to move northward immediately after he succeeded in lining the switch for entry to the siding and before he had given a back-up signal. Immediately after the train stopped at Sutton the front brakeman alighted and proceeded southward to provide flag protection. The ground was covered with ice, and his progress was slow because of the slippery footing. When he reached a point about 1,600 feet south of the south siding-switch he saw No. 26 approaching. He gave stop signals with a lighted red fusee until the train passed him. At this time he was about 630 feet south of his locomotive. When the engineer of No. 281 saw that No. 26 would not stop short of his locomotive he started the forward portion of his train in backward motion. He said that his locomotive was moving slowly when the collision occurred.

As No. 26 was approaching the point of accident the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The enginemen said that as the train was moving on the curve south of Sutton they saw the headlight of No. 281 and the stop signals given by the front brakeman of that train at approximately the same time. The engineer immediately closed the throttle and made an emergency application of the brakes. According to the tape of the speed-recording device, the speed was approximately 60 miles per hour when the brake application became effective and 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Cause

This accident was caused by a train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train without adequate protection.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-second day of January, 1957.

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.