

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3148
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT AUBURN, IND., ON
DECEMBER 21, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: New York Central
Date: December 21, 1947
Location: Auburn, Ind.
Kind of accident: Derailment
Train involved: Freight
Train number: Extra 4391 North
Engine number: 4391
Consist: 17 cars, caboose
Estimated speed: 30 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders;
yard and interlocking
limits
Track: Single; tangent; 0.28 percent
ascending grade northward
Weather: Foggy
Time: 9:54 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured
Cause: Failure to operate train in
accordance with interlocking
signal indication
Recommendation: That the New York Central Railroad
Company provide an approach signal
for the home signal involved

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3148

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

January 26, 1948

Accident at Auburn, Ind., on December 21, 1947, caused
by failure to operate train in accordance with
an interlocking signal indication.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On December 21, 1947, there was a derailment of a freight train on the New York Central Railroad at Auburn, Ind., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Indiana Public Service Commission.

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

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Toledo Division extending between Fort Wayne, Ind., and Jackson, Mich., 98.56 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Within yard and interlocking limits at Auburn, 20.8 miles north of Fort Wayne, this line intersects a single-track line of the Pennsylvania Railroad and a double-track line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The N.Y.C. main track extends north and south, and the P.R.R. and B.& O. main tracks extend northeast and southwest. The crossings are protected by interlocking signals. The N.Y.C. main track and the P.R.R. main track intersect at an angle of 30°54', at a point 490 feet south of the tower, and the N.Y.C. main track and the B.& O. main tracks intersect at an angle of 71°04', at a point 30 feet north of the tower, which is located in the southeast angle of the N.Y.C.-B.& O. crossing. The accident occurred within interlocking limits on the N.Y.C. main track at derail 44, a split-switch type derail located on the west rail and 1,006 feet south of the tower. The N.Y.C. main track is tangent throughout a distance of 3.9 miles immediately south of the point of accident and 0.8 mile northward. The grade for north-bound trains is, successively, 0.47 percent ascending 1,000 feet, 0.36 percent descending 1,300 feet and 0.28 percent ascending 788 feet to the point of accident and 112 feet northward.

A warning sign, a yard-limit sign and home signal 42, governing north-bound movements, are, respectively, 2,634 feet, 2,036 feet and 52 feet south of the point of accident. The warning sign is rectangular in shape, 2 feet wide and 4 feet long, mounted on a mast 6 feet 6 inches high, and bears the words "INTERLOCKING 2500 FEET" in black letters on a white background. The yard-limit sign is rectangular in shape, 2 feet wide and 3 feet long, mounted on a mast 6 feet high, and bears the words "YARD LIMIT" in black letters on a white background. Home signal 42 is of the two-arm, upper-quadrant, two-position, semaphore type, and is oil-lighted. Derail 44 is located 52 feet north of home signal 42. There is no approach signal for the home signal. The involved night aspect and corresponding indication of home signal 42 are as follows:

<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>
Red-over-red	STOP.

The interlocking machine is of the mechanical type and consists of 42 working levers in an 98-lever frame. Approach locking is provided on the B. & O. Electric time-locking is provided on the P.R.R. and the N.Y.C. in conjunction with home signals. Deraill 42 is provided with a facing-point-lock. Home signal 42 is bolt-locked by this deraill to prevent the signal from being cleared when the deraill is in derailing position.

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

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

Fixed Signal.--A signal of fixed location indicating a condition affecting the movement of a train.

Note to Definition of Fixed Signal.--The definition of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as * * *, interlocking, * * *, yard limit boards, * * * or other means for displaying indications that govern the movement of a train.

* * *

Slow Speed.--A speed not exceeding fifteen miles per hour.

Restricted Speed.--A speed not exceeding that which will enable a train to stop short of train ahead, obstruction, or switch not properly lined, lookout for broken rail, and not exceeding slow speed.

Note.--Speed restrictions apply to the entire train.

34. The engineman and fireman must, * * *, communicate to each other the indication of all signals affecting the movement of their train.

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first-class trains.

All other trains and engines must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

* * *

98. Trains must approach * * *, railroad crossings at grade, * * *, prepared to stop, unless the switches are properly lined, signals indicate proceed, and track is clear. * * *

663. Trains or engines must not pass an interlocking signal indicating "Stop" without receiving hand signals. Enginemen or trainmen must not proceed on hand signals until after their train or engine has been brought to a stop and they are fully informed of the situation; the movement must then be made at restricted speed.

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

93. YARD LIMITS.

* * *

Auburn

* * *

98. RAILROAD CROSSINGS AT GRADE.

Location	Railroad	Signals
* * *		
Auburn	B. & O., P.R.R.	Interlocking.
* * *		

In this territory the maximum authorized speed for all trains is 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 4391 North, a north-bound freight train consisting of engine 4391, 17 cars and a caboose, departed from Fort Wayne at 9:20 p. m., passed the warning sign and the south yard-limit sign at Auburn, passed home signal 42, which displayed stop, and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour the engine and the first three cars were derailed at derail 44, which was in derailing position.

The engine stopped on its left side, against an embankment and in line with the track, at a point 181 feet north of derail 44. The first three cars stopped practically upright. The derailed equipment was considerably damaged.

The fireman was killed, and the front brakeman was injured.

It was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9:54 p. m.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that all trains and engines must approach railroad crossings at grade prepared to stop unless the signals indicate proceed and the way is clear.

About 9:50 p. m. the operator at Auburn lined the route for an east-bound B. & O. freight train to proceed through the interlocking, and the controlling signals were displaying proper indications. About 4 minutes later, Extra 4391 North, a north-bound N.Y.C. freight train, passed N.Y.C. home signal 42, which displayed stop, and was derailed at derail 44, which was in derailing position.

As Extra 4391 North was approaching Auburn the speed was about 30 miles per hour. The engineer was maintaining a lookout ahead, the fireman and the front brakeman were on the deck of the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. There was no unusual condition of the engine that distracted the attention of the employees on the engine or obscured their vision. A dense fog which prevailed in this vicinity materially restricted visibility. The engineer said that he saw the warning sign, located about 2,500 feet south of home signal 42, but he misjudged the distance between this sign and the home signal and thought the speed of his train was being properly controlled until the engine was about 100 feet south of home signal 42. Then he saw the stop indication displayed by the home signal and he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the engine passed the signal and was derailed at derail 44 before the train could be stopped. The engine was equipped with a speedometer. The brakes of this train had been tested, and they functioned properly. The conductor, the front brakeman and the flagman said they thought the speed of the train was being controlled properly in this territory, and they were not aware of anything being wrong until the brakes were applied in emergency. The fireman was killed.

If an approach signal had been provided in conjunction with home signal 42, the engineer of Extra 4391 North would have received definite warning at the approach signal that the home signal was displaying stop, and probably this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate train in accordance with an interlocking signal indication.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the New York Central Railroad Company provide an approach signal for the home signal involved.

Dated at Washington, D. C.; this twenty-sixth day of January, 1948.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.