INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3366

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR NORWOOD, N. Y., ON

SEPTEMBER 26, 1950

SUMMARY

Date:	September 26, 1950
Railroad:	New York Central
Location:	Norwood, N. Y.
Kind of accident:	Collision
Equipment involved:	Track motor-car : Motor-truck
Estimated speeds:	Unknown : 30 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and manual-block system
Track:	Single; 0°24' curve; 0.9 percent descending grade northward
Highway:	Tangent; crosses track at angle of 88°22'; level
Weather:	Cloudy
Time:	10:34 a. m.
Casualties:	3 killed; 1 injured
Cause:	Failure of track motor-car operator and motor-truck driver properly to control speed of their respective vehicles approaching rail-highway grade crossing

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3366

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

NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

November 20, 1950

Accident near Norwood, N. Y., on September 26, 1950, caused by failure of the track motor-car operator and the motor-truck driver properly to control the speed of their respective vehicles approaching a rail-highway grade crossing.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 26, 1950, there was a collision between a track motor-car on the New York Central Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade-crossing near Norwood, N. Y., which resulted in the death of three employees and the injury of the driver of the motor-truck.

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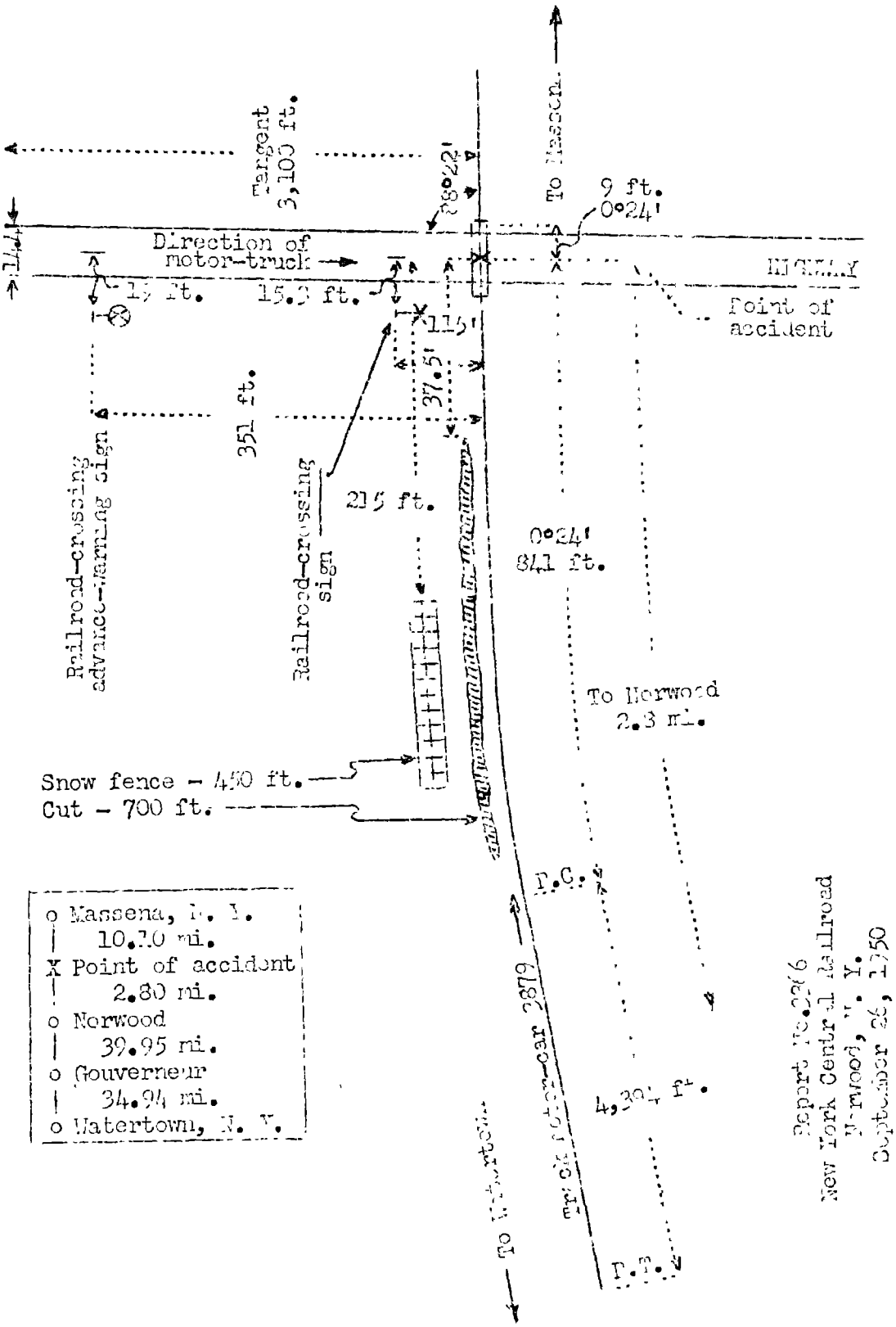
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Report No. 2216
New York Central Railroad
Norwood, N. Y.
September 26, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the St. Lawrence Division extending between Watertown and Massena, N. Y., 87.79 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 a manual-block system. The movements of track motor-cars are authorized by Motor Car Permit Form M. This accident occurred at a point 77.69 miles north of Watertown and 2.8 miles north of the station at Norwood, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Hales Highway. From the south on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent 4,394 feet in length and a 0°24' curve to the right 841 feet to the point of accident and 9 feet northward. South of the crossing the track is laid in a cut about 700 feet in length, the north end of which is 115 feet south of the crossing. The walls of the cut rise to a height of 3 feet above the level of the tops of the rails. A snow fence, 6 feet 5 inches high and about 450 feet long, extends along the top of the west wall of the cut and 35 feet west of the center-line of the track. The north end of the snow fence is 215 feet south of the center-line of the highway. The grade for north-bound trains is 0.9 percent descending northward at the point of accident. The highway intersects the railroad at an angle of 88°22'. The highway is 14.4 feet wide and is surfaced with macadam. From the west the highway is tangent throughout a distance of 3,100 feet to the crossing and a considerable distance eastward. The grade for east-bound vehicles is practically level. The crossing is 24 feet in width. It is of plank construction and is level with the tops of the rails. Flangeways 2-5/8 inches wide are maintained.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign, 2.5 feet in diameter, is located to the right of the direction of east-bound highway traffic, 351 feet west of the crossing and 19 feet south of the center-line of the highway. The sign is mounted on a mast and its top is 4 feet 3-3/4 inches above the surface of the ground. This sign bears two intersecting diagonal black lines and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. The letters and the lines are outlined by colorless reflector buttons. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located in the southwest angle of the intersection, 37.5 feet west of the center-line of the track and 15.3 feet south of the center-line of the highway. This sign is mounted on a mast and the center of the cross-buck is 12 feet above the surface of the ground. The cross-buck bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black letters on a white background.

This carrier's rules for the operation of track motor, velocipede, hand and push cars read in part as follows:

1902. The operation of track motor * * * cars, must be in charge of qualified employes * * *

1908. Cars must be inspected daily by the employe in charge. Defective cars must not be operated.

1922. * * * Cars must approach crossings * * * prepared to stop.

Cars must be brought to a stop before proceeding over any unprotected highway crossing or crossing protected by automatic signal not operating, where a full, clear and unobstructed view of at least 500 feet in either direction from the track is not afforded; all such cars must come to a stop before crossing a highway or street in the event of a vehicle approaching the crossing within 500 feet.

1924. Cars shall not exceed 10 miles per hour when passing * * * over * * * highway crossings.

At other points hand cars shall not exceed 15 miles per hour and track motor cars 20 miles per hour.

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Description of Accident

Track motor-car 3879, occupied by a track motor-car operator, a supervisor of track and a lineman, departed northward from Norwood at 10:29 a. m., and while moving at an unknown speed it struck a motor-truck on a rail-highway grade-crossing 2.8 miles north of the station at Norwood.

The motor-truck involved in the accident was a 1941 Chevrolet owned by George Underwood, Norfolk, N. Y. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held New York chauffeur's license 7394496. The motor-truck was powered by a 6-cylinder gasoline motor, No. AJ875092, and bore New York license 533-536. It was provided with a steel-enclosed cab. The wheel base was 13 feet 2 inches long, and the total length of the vehicle was 19 feet 3 inches. The motor-truck was provided with a dump body with extended sides. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels. The brake was hydraulically operated and was provided with a vacuum booster. The motor-truck weighed 9,275 pounds. At the time of the accident the

cargo consisted of 19,600 pounds of No. 2 crushed stone. The truck was moving eastward at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour when it entered the crossing and was struck by track motor-car 3879.

Track motor-car 3879 was derailed to the right. It overturned and stopped at a point 73 feet east of the track and 16 feet south of the center-line of the highway, and it was demolished.

The motor-truck overturned to the right and stopped at a point 246 feet east of the track and 21 feet south of the center-line of the highway. The fuel tanks were punctured and gasoline became ignited. The motor-truck was badly damaged.

The employees killed were the track motor-car operator, the supervisor of track and the lineman.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:34 a. m.

According to data furnished by the railroad, track motor-car 3879 was of the 4-wheel type, was equipped with a 4-wheel brake and was insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits. It was powered by a 1-cylinder 8-13 horsepower gasoline engine. It was equipped with safety railings and a windshield and had seating capacity for 4 persons. It weighed 1,100 pounds.

The average daily movement during the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident was 9.8 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., September 30, 1930, 205 automobiles, 154 trucks, 2 horse-drawn vehicles and 2 bicycles passed over the crossing.

Discussion

In the vicinity of the point of accident the movements of track motor-cars on the main track are authorized by Motor Car Permit Form M. This form specifies the extent to which the main track may be used by a motor-car. The rules governing operation on this line require that the operation of track motor-cars must be in the charge of qualified employees. Track motor-cars must be inspected daily by the employee in charge and must not be operated if found defective. They must be so operated that they can be stopped short of rail-highway grade-crossings, and must be stopped before they proceed

over an unprotected highway crossing where a full, clear and unobstructed view of at least 500 feet from the track is not afforded. They must be stopped short of a highway crossing if a vehicle is approaching on the highway within 500 feet of the crossing.

The investigation disclosed that at 5:58 a. m. on the day of the accident Motor Car Permit Form M, addressed to the operator of track motor-car 3879, was delivered to the track supervisor by the operator at Gouverneur, 39.95 miles south of Norwood. This permit authorized the movement of track motor-car 3879 northward from Gouverneur. Track motor-car 3879, occupied by the track motor-car operator and the track supervisor, departed northward from Gouverneur at 6 a. m. and arrived at Norwood about 10:26 a. m. About 10:27 a. m., Motor Car Permit Form M, addressed to the operator of track motor-car 3879, was delivered to the track supervisor by the operator at Norwood. This permit authorized the movement of the track motor-car from Norwood to Massena, 12.9 miles. The lineman, who was inspecting communication lines, boarded the track motor-car at Norwood. The operator at Norwood said that track motor-car 3879, occupied by the track supervisor, the track motor-car operator, and the lineman, departed northward at 10:29 a. m. About 5 minutes later and while moving at an unknown speed, the track motor-car struck a motor-truck on a rail-highway grade-crossing 2.8 miles north of the station at Norwood.

The driver of the motor-truck said he started to work about 6:45 a. m. on the day of the accident. He was an experienced driver and was familiar with the route over which the motor-truck was moving. When the accident occurred he was making his third eastward trip for that day over the crossing. The vehicle was engaged in moving crushed stone from a quarry to a highway construction project, a haul of about 12 miles. The motor-truck was in good mechanical condition. The driver said that as the motor-truck was approaching the crossing the speed was reduced to about 30 miles per hour. He looked in each direction for approaching trains. Because of the restricted view of the track south of the crossing and a snow fence along the west wall of the cut and buildings and vegetation adjacent to the track, the driver did not see the track motor-car until the motor-truck was about to enter the crossing. He immediately applied the brake but the motor-truck could not be stopped before it entered the crossing. After the collision occurred the driver lost control of the motor-truck and it overturned. Gasoline became ignited and the vehicle was further damaged by fire.

From a point 300 feet south of the crossing, the operator of a north-bound track motor-car has an unobstructed view of the highway west of the crossing a distance of 70 feet. At a distance of 50 feet south of the crossing, the unobstructed view of the highway west of the point of accident is 370 feet. From a point 150 feet west of the crossing on the highway the driver of an east-bound vehicle has an unobstructed view of the track south of the crossing a distance of 181 feet. At a point 20 feet west of the crossing the unobstructed view of the track south of the crossing is 2,000 feet. The driver of the motor-truck did not see the track motor-car until it was within a few feet of the crossing. All of the occupants of the track motor-car were killed in the accident, and it could not be determined what action was taken to stop the track motor-car before the collision occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure of the track motor-car operator and the motor-truck driver properly to control the speed of their respective vehicles approaching a rail-highway grade crossing.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twentieth day of November, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.