

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3592  
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR MATTOON, ILL., ON  
SEPTEMBER 20, 1954

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SUMMARY

Date: September 30, 1964

Railroad: New York Central

Location: Mattoon, Ill.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train Motor-truck

Train number: 12

Engine number: Diesel-electric units  
4009 and 4112

Consist: 11 cars

Estimated speeds: 68 m. p. h. : 35 m. p. h.

Operation: Signal indications

Track: Single, tangent; 0.36 percent  
descending grade eastward

Highway: Tangent, crosses track at angle  
of 81° 1.13 percent ascending  
grade southward

Weather: Clear

Time: 11:45 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed, 79 injured

Cause: Motor-truck occupying rail-highway  
grade crossing immediately in front  
of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3592

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

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October 27, 1954

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Accident near Mattoon, Ill., on September 20, 1954, caused  
by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade  
crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

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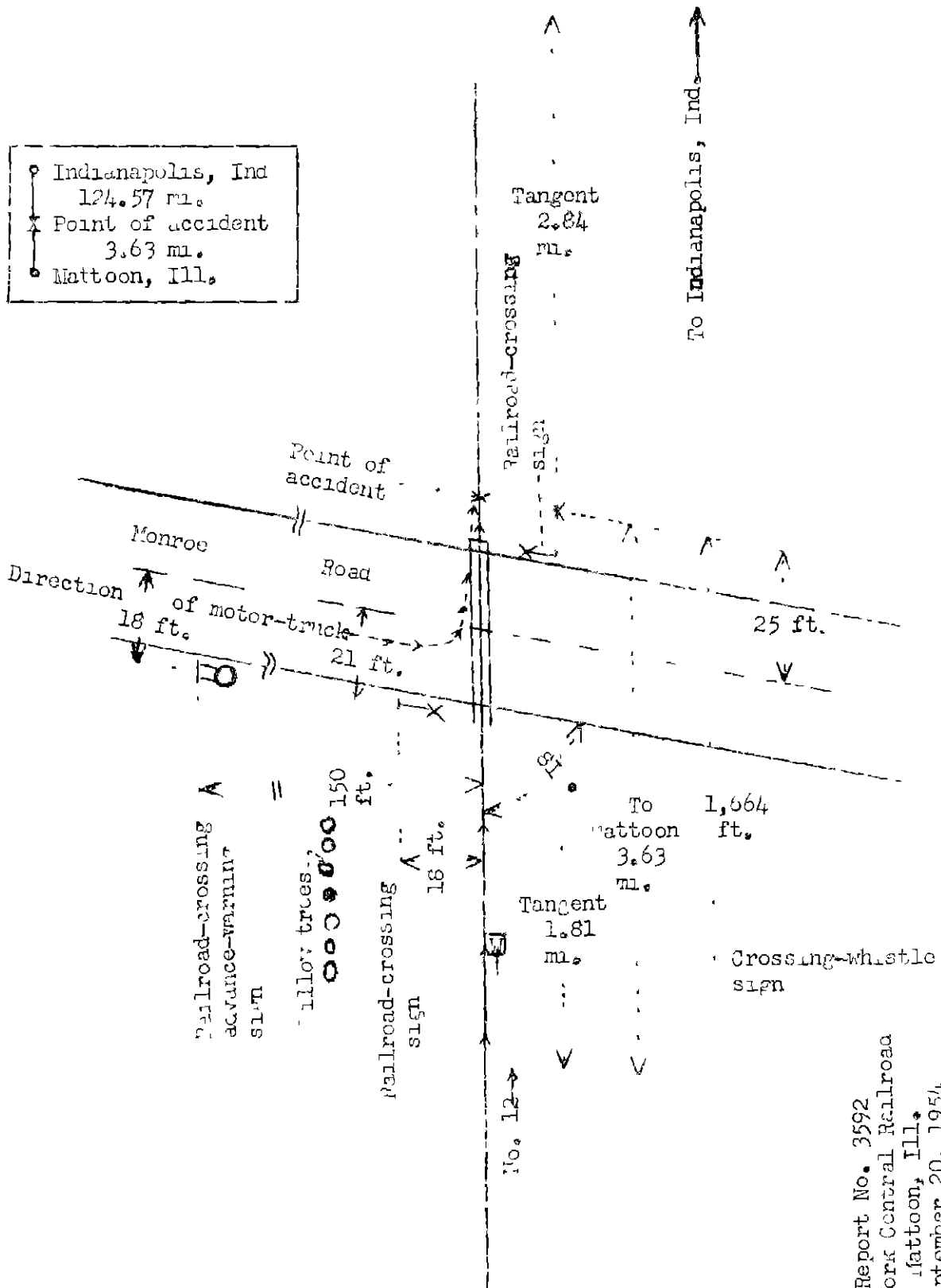
<sup>1</sup>  
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On September 20, 1954, there was a collision between a passenger train on the New York Central Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Mattoon, Ill., which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck, and the injury of 62 passengers, 9 dining-car employees, 3 Pullman Company employees, 1 person carried under contract, and 4 train-service employees.

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



Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Illinois Division extending between Mattoon, Ill., and Indianapolis, Ind., 128.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by signal indications supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 3.63 miles east of Mattoon, where the railroad is crossed at grade by Monroe Road. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 1.81 miles immediately west of the point of accident and 2.84 miles eastward. The grade is 0.36 percent descending eastward at the point of accident.

In the immediate vicinity of the crossing Monroe Road is tangent and intersects the railroad at an angle of 81 degrees. It is 25 feet in width. A strip 9 feet in width on the east side of the highway is surfaced with concrete and the remaining width is surfaced with gravel. The railroad crossing is 31 feet in width. Planking on each side of each rail provides a flangeway of three inches, and the remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material. The grade for south-bound vehicles averages 2.8 percent ascending throughout a distance of 240 feet immediately north of the crossing, and it is 1.13 percent ascending at the crossing.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign 30 inches in diameter is located approximately 18 feet west of the center-line of the highway and 150 feet north of the track. This sign is mounted on two uprights and is 6.5 feet above the level of the highway. It bears two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. A standard cross-buck railroad-crossing sign is located in the northwest angle of the intersection, 21 feet west of the center-line of the highway and 18 feet north of the center-line of the track. This sign is mounted on a mast and is 10 feet above the surface of the highway. It bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black on a white background. A similar sign is located in the southeast angle of the intersection. A crossing-whistle sign for east-bound trains is located 1,664 feet west of the crossing.

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

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "—" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

SOUND	INDICATION
<p>* * *</p>	
(1) — — o —	(1) Approaching public crossings at grade.
<p>* * *</p>	

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17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and by night. \* \* \*

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30. The engine bell must be rung when an engine is approaching and passing public crossings at grade \* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 85 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 12, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 4009 and 4112, coupled in multiple-unit control, one mail car, one baggage-dormitory car, two coaches, one dining car, two sleeping cars, one coach, and three sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. Both Diesel-electric units and the second to the eleventh cars, inclusive, were equipped with tightlock couplers. This train departed from Mattoon at 11:40 a. m., 5 minutes late, and while it was moving at a speed of 68 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck a motor-truck at the rail-highway grade crossing at Monroe Road.

The vehicle involved was an International Harvester dump truck, Model L-164, owned by the Bryant Trucking Company of Mattoon. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Illinois chauffeur's license No. 246 706. The motor-truck bore 1954 Illinois license No. H 1227. It was provided with an enclosed cab, and was equipped with hydraulic brakes. Dual wheels and tires were provided at the rear. The length of the vehicle was 15 feet 10 inches, and the total weight of the vehicle and its cargo of crushed stone was approximately 12 tons. This vehicle was moving southward on Monroe Road at an estimated speed of 35 to 40 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 12.

The first to the ninth cars, inclusive, and the rear truck of the second Diesel-electric unit of No. 12 were derailed. Separations occurred between the second Diesel-electric unit and the first car, and between the fourth and fifth, the sixth and seventh, and the seventh and eighth cars. All separations except that between the second Diesel-electric unit and the first car occurred as a result of broken couplers. The Diesel-electric units stopped with the front end of the first unit 1,050 feet east of the point of accident. The second Diesel-electric unit stopped approximately in line with the track. The first to the fourth cars, inclusive, stopped in line, with the front end of the first car on the track structure and 70 feet west of the rear end of the locomotive, and the rear end of the fourth car 50 feet south of the track. The first and second cars leaned to the south at angles of 30 degrees and 45 degrees, respectively, and the third and fourth cars stopped on their right sides. None of the other derailed equipment overturned. The fifth and sixth cars stopped with the front end of the fifth car near the rear end of the fourth car, and the rear end of the sixth car about 20 feet south of the track. The seventh car stopped with the front end near the rear end of the sixth car, and the rear end 25 feet north of the track. The eighth car stopped with the front end near the rear end of the seventh car, and the rear end about 10 feet south of the track. The ninth car stopped with the rear end on the track structure. Both Diesel-electric units and all derailed cars were damaged.

The motor-truck stopped about 50 feet east of the highway and 30 feet north of the track. It was demolished.

The conductor, the assistant conductor, the front brakeman, and the flagman of No. 12 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 11:45 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 23.3 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 a. m., September 27, 1954, 530 automobiles, 287 trucks, 2 buses, and 2 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

### Discussion

As No. 12 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the engineer, the fireman, and an engineer not on duty were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in various locations in the cars of the train. The headlight was lighted. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly. The employees on the locomotive said that the engineer began to sound the grade-crossing whistle signal at the crossing-whistle sign west of Monroe Road and prolonged the signal until the locomotive reached the crossing. The bell was ringing during this time. Both engineers said they thought that when they first saw the motor-truck the locomotive was about 600 feet west of the crossing and the truck was about 300 feet north of the crossing. They estimated that the truck was moving at a speed of between 35 and 40 miles per hour. Their view of the truck then became somewhat obstructed by trees in the northwest angle of the intersection. When the engineer not on duty became aware that the speed of the truck was not being reduced he called a warning. The engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The fireman said that when the truck reached a point about 35 feet north of the crossing the driver attempted to turn it toward the east. The left side of the front of the locomotive struck the truck directly behind the cab. The collision occurred approximately 25 feet east of the crossing and at approximately the time that the brakes were applied.

The driver of the motor-truck was a resident of Mattoon and had been engaged in hauling road building material over this crossing during a period of about 20 days prior to the day of the accident.

As a vehicle approaches the crossing from the north, the driver's view of an approaching east-bound train is somewhat obstructed by a row of willow trees located about 50 feet north of the track and extending between points 70 feet and 175 feet west of the highway. After a vehicle passes these trees, the driver has an unobstructed view of an approaching east-bound train throughout a distance of several thousand feet.



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-seventh day of October, 1954.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,  
Secretary.