

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3602
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ONEIDA, N. Y., ON
DECEMBER 4, 1954

SUMMARY

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Date: | December 4, 1954 |
| Railroad: | New York Central |
| Location: | Oneida, N. Y. |
| Kind of accident: | Collision |
| Equipment involved: | Freight train • Locomotive with cars |
| Train numbers: | Extra 1034 East • Extra 1004 West |
| Engine numbers: | Diesel-electric units 1034 and 3344 • Diesel-electric units 1004 and 1106 |
| Consists: | 42 cars, caboose • 8 cars |
| Speeds: | Standing • 23 m. p. h. |
| Operation: | Signal indications, yard limits |
| Tracks: | Four; 1° curve, 0.28 percent descending grade eastward |
| Weather: | Clear |
| Time | 3 33 a. m. |
| Casualties: | 1 killed, 1 injured |
| Cause | Failure to operate locomotive with cars in accordance with yard limit restrictions and a signal indication |

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3602

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

January 7, 1955

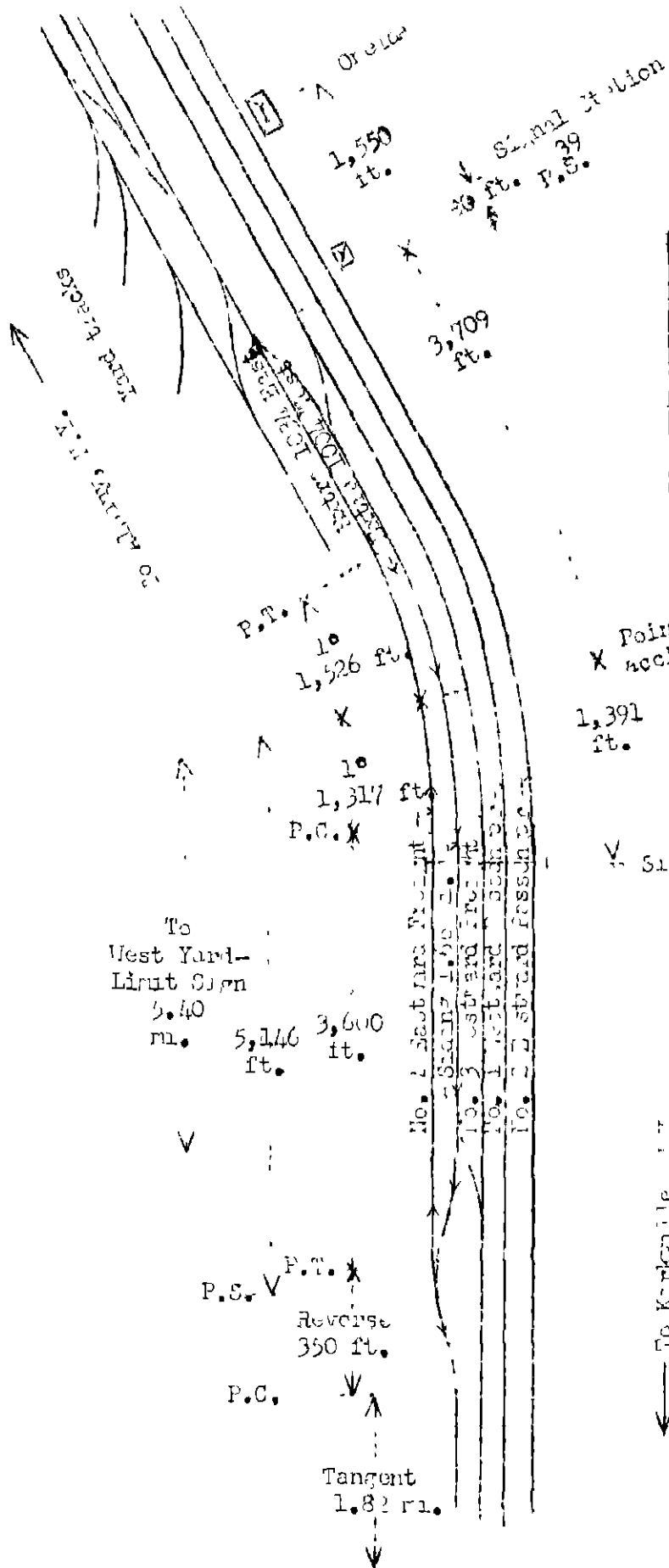
Accident near Oneida, N. Y., on December 4, 1954, caused
by failure to operate a locomotive with cars in
accordance with yard-limit restrictions and a signal
indication.

1
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On December 4, 1954, there was a collision between a
freight train and a locomotive with cars on the New York
Central Railroad near Oneida, N. Y., which resulted in the
death of one employee, and the injury of one employee.
This accident was investigated in conjunction with a repre-
sentative of the New York Public Service Commission.

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



| | | |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| • | Albany, N.Y. | 105.90 mi. |
| • | Signal Station 34 (km.) | 15.43 mi. |
| • | Oreida | 1.00 mi. |
| X | Point of accident | 4.12 mi. |
| • | Cunastota | 10.17 mi. |
| • | Kirkville, N.Y. | |

X Point of accident
1,391 ft.

V S.M. 26 04

↓ To Kirkville, N.Y.

Report No. 3602
New York Central Railroad
Oreida, N.Y.
December 24, 1954

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Mohawk Division extending between Kirkville and Albany, N. Y., 136.62 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a four-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The main tracks from south to north are designated as No. 2, eastward passenger; No. 1, westward passenger, No. 3, westward freight, and No. 4, eastward freight. Yard limits extend throughout a distance of approximately 8 miles on tracks Nos. 3 and 4 between points west of Canastota and east of Oneida. These stations are located, respectively, 10.17 miles and 15.29 miles east of Kirkville. From a point 1,550 feet west of the station at Oneida a siding extends westward between tracks Nos. 3 and 4 for a distance of 1.63 miles. The switches at the east end of the siding are power-operated and are controlled from an interlocking station designated Signal Station 39, which is located on the south side of track No. 2 at a point 80 feet east of the east switch of the siding. The accident occurred on track No. 4 at a point 5,146 feet east of the west switch of the siding, 3,709 feet west of Signal Station 39, and 5.40 miles east of the west yard-limit sign. From the west on track No. 4 there are, in succession, a tangent 1.82 miles in length, a reverse curve in the vicinity of the west end of the siding 350 feet, a tangent 3,600 feet, and a 1° curve to the left 1,317 feet to the point of accident and 1,526 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound movements on this track is, successively, 0.59 percent descending a distance of 1,400 feet and 0.28 percent descending 4,161 feet to the point of accident and 159 feet eastward.

Semi-automatic signal 26604, governing east-bound movements on track No. 4, is located 1,391 feet west of the point of accident. This signal is of the one-arm upper-quadrant semaphore type and is mounted on a signal bridge above track No. 4. It displays three aspects and is continuously lighted. The aspect applicable to this investigation, and the corresponding indication are as follows:

| <u>Signal</u> | <u>Night Aspect</u> | <u>Indication</u> |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| 26604 | Red-over-red, staggered | STOP, THEN PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED. |

The controlling circuits are so arranged that when the block immediately east of the signal is occupied the signal indicates Stop-then-proceed-at-restricted-speed. The automatic train-stop inductor for signal 26604 is located 62 feet 8 inches west of the signal.

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

DEFINITIONS

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, look out for broken rail, and not exceeding slow speed.

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 main track is seen or known to be clear.

Note.--Where automatic block signal rules are in effect "known to be clear" includes when track is known to be clear by signal indication.--Yard limits will be indicated by yard limit boards.

514. A train or engine entering a block between signals must be protected as required by the rules and must proceed at restricted speed.

ENGINEMEN.

928. They must, if anything withdraws attention from constant lookout * * * or weather conditions make observation of signals or warnings in any way doubtful, at once so regulate speed as to make train progress entirely safe.

FIREMEN.

941. They must, except when engaged in firing, keep constant lookout and give immediate notice to engine-man of any signals or other conditions affecting the safety of their train.

The maximum authorized speed for the locomotive of Extra 1004 West moving backward was 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 1034 East, an east-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 1034 and 3344, coupled in multiple-unit control, 42 cars, and a caboose. This train passed Kirkville at 3 a. m. and stopped on track No. 4 about 3:25 a. m. with the rear end 1,391 feet east of signal 26604 and 3,709 feet west of Signal Station 39. About 8 minutes later, after the locomotive had been detached and had moved to a yard track in the vicinity of the station, the rear end of the train was struck by the eastward car of a cut of eight cars which was being moved eastward by the locomotive of Extra 1004 West.

Extra 1004 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 1004 and 1106, coupled in multiple-unit control, 145 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Signal Station 34 at Rome, 16.43 miles east of the point of accident, at 1:09 a. m. It arrived at Oneida on track No. 3 about 2:35 a. m., entered the siding, and stopped about 3 a. m., with the locomotive near the west end of that track. The locomotive and the first eight cars were then detached from the train. The first, second, fifth, and sixth were empty hopper cars and the other cars of the cut were loaded box cars. Soon after Extra 1034 East passed, the locomotive with the cut of cars moved westward and entered track No. 4. After the switches were restored to normal position the locomotive, moving backward and pushing the cars, proceeded eastward, passed signal 26604, which indicated Stop-then-proceed-at-restricted-speed, and while moving at a speed of 23 miles per hour the eastward car of the cut struck the rear end of Extra 1034 East.

The caboose of Extra 1034 East was derailed, and the rear truck of the rear car was displaced. The caboose was demolished, and the rear car was badly damaged. The four most easterly cars being pushed by the locomotive of Extra 1004 West were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the track. Two of the cars were destroyed, and two were badly damaged. Three cars on the siding were struck and damaged by derailed equipment. The wreckage of the caboose became ignited, apparently as a result of damage to the caboose stove, and derailed equipment was further damaged by fire.

The flagman of Extra 1034 East was killed. The conductor of Extra 1034 East was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3 33 a. m.

The first Diesel-electric unit of the locomotive of Extra 1004 West was an A-type unit with the control compartment at the front end. The automatic train-stop apparatus on this unit is not arranged for operation when the unit is moving backward with the current of traffic.

Discussion

After Extra 1034 East arrived at Oneida, the locomotive was detached from the train and proceeded eastward to yard tracks in the vicinity of the station. The front brakeman and the swing brakeman accompanied the locomotive, and the conductor and the flagman remained at the rear of the train. None of the members of the crew who accompanied the locomotive to the yard tracks was aware that the accident had occurred until they returned with cars which were to be added to the train. The conductor was so seriously injured that he could not be questioned during this investigation.

When Extra 1004 West arrived at Oneida it was routed to the siding. As this train was entering the siding the engineer and the front brakeman were on the locomotive. The flagman was in the caboose. The swing brakeman alighted from the caboose in the vicinity of the yard tracks near the station, and the conductor alighted and proceeded to Signal Station 39. The train was stopped at the west end of the siding. The locomotive and the first eight cars, which were to be set off at Oneida, were then detached from the train by the front brakeman. He proceeded to a telephone in the vicinity of the switch on track No. 4 and communicated with the operator at Signal Station 39 to request permission for the locomotive with the cut of cars to return to Signal Station 39. The operator informed him that the dispatcher would not authorize the movement until two east-bound trains on track No. 4 had passed. The front brakeman said that he returned to the locomotive and gave this information to the engineer. The first train passed Oneida at 3:18 a. m. Extra 1034 East, the second train, passed the west siding-switch approximately 7 minutes after the first train, and immediately afterward the front brakeman again communicated by telephone with the operator and received permission for the locomotive with the cut of cars to return to Signal Station 39 on track No. 4.

After the switches were lined for movement to track No. 4 and a 3-minute interval had elapsed the locomotive moved westward and stopped with the rear car clear of the switch on track No. 4. The front brakeman then restored the switches to normal position, gave back-up signals with a white light, and boarded the east car of the cut as it moved eastward. He took a position near the center of the running board on top of the car. He said he observed that signal 26604 indicated Stop-then-proceed-at-restricted-speed when the movement began, and he gave reduce-speed signals when approximately 1,800 feet west of the signal. The speed was not reduced, and he then gave stop signals. He observed the markers of the preceding train when the east car of the cut was in the vicinity of the signal. He became concerned and climbed down the ladder on the north side of the car and gave stop signals from this position. He said that there was no reduction in speed, and he continued to give stop signals and shouted to warn the engineer and the occupants of the caboose. He jumped from the car about 225 feet west of the point of collision. He estimated that the speed of the movement was about 15 miles per hour. The engineer and the fireman said that they did not observe the indication of signal 26604 at any time before the eastward movement began. The engineer said that he was maintaining a lookout from the open window of the control compartment as the locomotive moved eastward. The throttle was opened to the second notch. He estimated the speed was about 15 miles per hour. He said he was not aware that the preceding train was to perform work at Oneida. Soon after the movement started, some foreign material, which he thought came from the exhaust stack of the locomotive, became lodged in his eye. He immediately attempted to remove it, or to relieve the pain caused by its presence by rubbing the eye. His attention was thus diverted, and he did not observe the indication of signal 26604 nor the reduce-speed signals and stop signals given by the front brakeman. He said that when he again looked eastward he observed the front brakeman jump from the car. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the collision occurred before the speed was materially reduced. The fireman said that he was maintaining a lookout from his open window in the direction of movement but his view of the rear end of Extra 1034 East was obstructed because of track curvature. He did not observe the indication of signal 26604, and the front brakeman was not within his range of vision. He said that as the movement proceeded eastward he occasionally glanced across the control compartment and each time observed

that the engineer appeared to be maintaining a lookout in the direction of movement. He was not aware that the engineer was attempting to remove foreign material from his eye. He estimated that the speed of the movement was about 15 miles per hour at the time the brakes were applied in emergency. According to the tape of the speed-recording device the speed of the eastward movement on track No. 4 increased continuously to the point of collision. Signal 26604 was passed by the locomotive at a speed slightly in excess of 21 miles per hour, and the collision occurred at a speed of 23 miles per hour.

This accident occurred within yard limits. Under the rules of this carrier governing the operation of trains and engines within yard limits, the locomotive of Extra 1004 West was required to be operated in such manner that the cars it was handling could be stopped short of a train or obstruction unless the main track was seen or known to be clear. The indication of the signal which was passed by the locomotive placed a similar restriction on the movement.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to operate a locomotive with cars in accordance with yard-limit restrictions and a signal indication.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of January, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,
Secretary.