INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3161

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT OAKLAND, OHIO, ON

JANUARY 30, 1948

SUMMARY

Railroad:	New York, Chicago and St. Louis	
Date:	January 30, 1948	
Location:	Oakland, Ohio	
Kind of accident:	Side collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	Second 49	: Extra 714 East
Engine numbers:	717	: 714
Consists:	84 cars, caboose	: 89 cars, caboose
Speeds:	Standing	: 32 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders, and manual-block system for following movements only	
Track:	Single; tangent; 0.5 percent descending grade eastward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	3:55 a. m.	
Casualties:	2 killed; 2 injured	
Cause:	Failure to obey meet order	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3161

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

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

March 15, 1948

Accident at Oakland, Ohio, on January 30, 1948, caused by failure to obey a meet order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On January 30, 1948, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad at Oakland, Ohio, which resulted in the death of two employees, and the injury of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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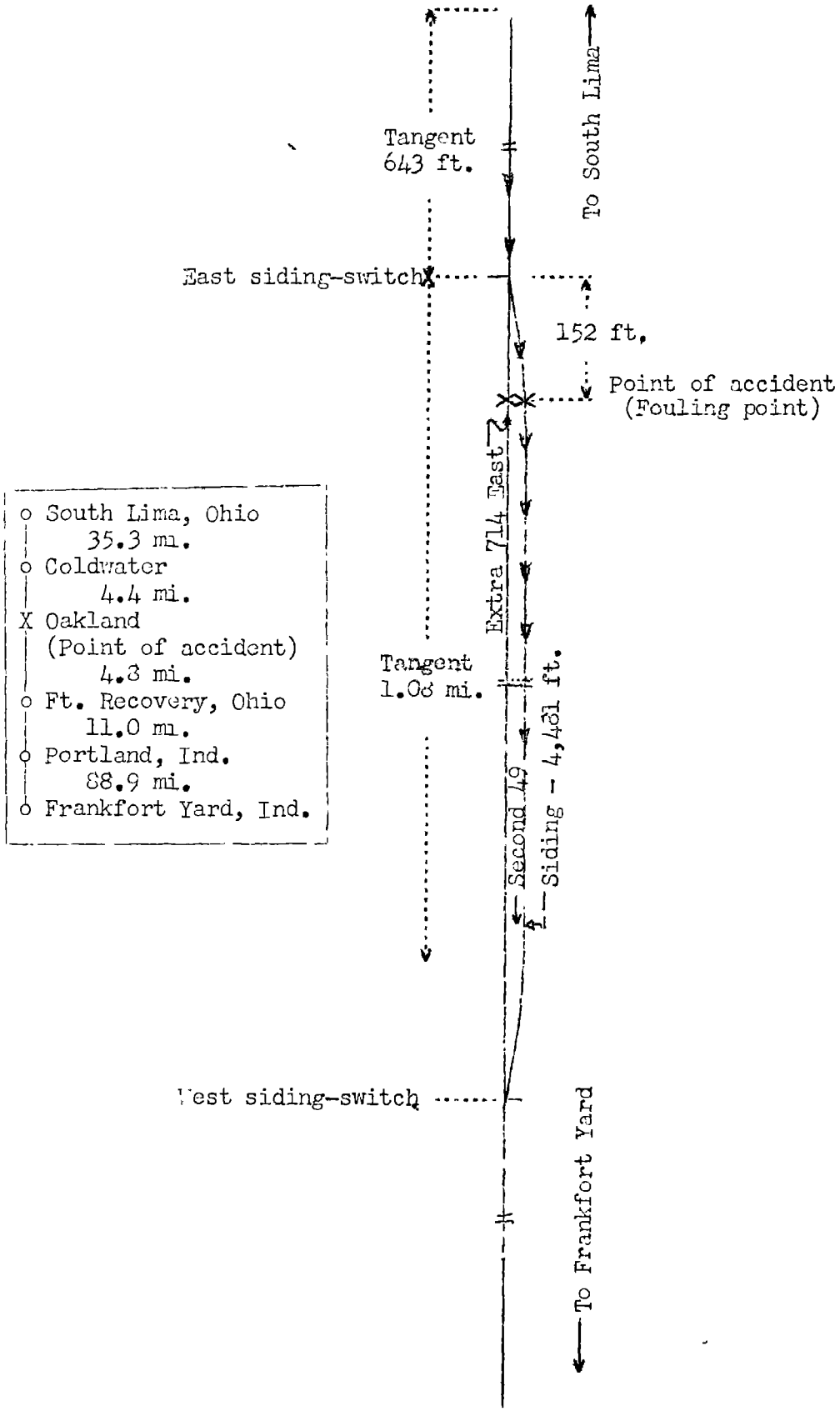
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 3161
New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad
Oakland, Ohio
January 30, 1948

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Sandusky Division extending between South Lima, Ohio, and Frankfort Yard, Ind., 144.4 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following movements only. At Oakland, 39.7 miles west of South Lima, a siding 4,481 feet in length parallels the main track on the south. There is no station at Oakland. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the east siding-switch, at a point 152 feet west of the switch. The main track is tangent throughout a distance of 1.08 miles immediately west of the east siding-switch and 643 feet eastward. The grade is 0.5 percent descending eastward.

The capacity of the siding at Oakland is 85 cars. The switchstand at the east siding-switch is located on the north side of the main track. It is provided with two targets and an oil-burning switch lamp. The centers of the targets are 7.7 feet above the tops of the ties, and the center of the switch lamp is 9.35 feet above the tops of the ties. When the switch is lined normally, a white rectangular target is at right angles to the track, and the lamp, when lighted, displays a green aspect in the direction of an approaching train. When the switch is lined for entry to the siding, a red circular target is at right angles to the track, and the lamp, when lighted, displays a red aspect in the direction of an approaching train. At the time of the accident the switch lamp was not lighted.

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

DEFINITIONS.

Train.--An engine, * * * or more than one engine, * * * coupled, with or without cars, displaying markers.

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

Note.--The defintion of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as switch, * * * or other means for displaying indications that govern movement of a train or engine.

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night. It must be concealed or extinguished when a train turns out to meet another train and has stopped clear of main track.

* * *

19. The following signals will be displayed to the rear of every train, as markers, to indicate the rear of the train:

* * *

Lights * * *, showing yellow to the front and side and red to the rear; * * *

* * *

27. A signal imperfectly displayed, or the absence of a signal at a place where a signal is usually shown, must be regarded as the most restrictive indication that can be given by that signal, except that when the day indication is plainly seen, or when sufficient lights in a position or color position light signal are displayed to determine indication of the signal, it will govern.

Engine and train crews using a switch where the switch light is imperfectly displayed or absent must, if practicable, correct or replace the light.

A signal imperfectly displayed or the absence of a signal at a place where a signal is usually shown, must be promptly reported to the Chief Train Dispatcher.

S-89. At meeting points the inferior train must take the siding * * *

* * * The inferior train must pull into the siding when practicable. * * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

S-A

Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains.

(1) * * *

* * *

No. 5 five Eng. 173 meet Extra East Eng. 95 nine five at A.
* * *

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Coldwater, 4.4 miles east of Oakland, the crew of Second 49, a west-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 25 reading in part as follows:

Second 49 four nine eng 717
take siding meet extra east
eng 714 seven one four at
Oakland * * *

Second 49, consisting of engine 717, 84 cars and a caboose, departed from Coldwater, the last open office, at 3:13 a. m., 4 hours 14 minutes late, and stopped at the east siding-switch at Oakland about 3:22 a. m. Soon afterward this train proceeded westward on the siding and stopped about 3:49 a. m., with the engine on the siding about 390 feet east of the clearance point of the west siding-switch, the seventy-fourth to seventy-seventh cars, inclusive, on the turnout of the east siding-switch, and the rear seven cars and the caboose on the main track east of the switch. About 6 minutes later, at which time this train was in the same location, the seventy-seventh car was struck by Extra 714 East.

At Portland, 15.8 miles west of Oakland, the crew of Extra 714 East, an east-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 25. This train, consisting of engine 714, 89 cars and a caboose, departed from Portland at 3:26 a. m., passed Ft. Recovery, the last open office, 4.8 miles west of Oakland, at 3:45 a. m. and while moving at a speed of 32 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed recorder, it struck Second 49.

The seventy-seventh to seventy-ninth cars, inclusive, of Second 49, and the engine, the first seven cars and the forty-ninth to fifty-first cars, inclusive, of Extra 714 East were derailed. The engine of Extra 714 East stopped on its left side down an embankment, with the front end 310 feet east of the point of accident. The derailed equipment was considerably damaged.

The fireman and the swing brakeman of Extra 714 East were killed, and the engineer and the front brakeman of this train were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:55 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in this vicinity was 18.6 trains.

Discussion

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 25, which established Oakland as the meeting point between Second 49, a west-bound second-class freight train, and Extra 714 East, an east-bound freight train. The order included the instruction for Second 49 to take siding at the meeting point. Under the rules, Extra 714 East was required to stop clear of the east siding-switch unless Second 49 was into clear on the siding. Second 49 entered the siding at Oakland at the east switch and stopped about 3:49 a. m., with the rear seven cars and the caboose standing on the main track east of the switch. After the train stopped, the engineer extinguished the headlight. About 6 minutes later the seventy-seventh car was struck by Extra 714 East.

When Second 49 entered the siding the enginemen, the front brakeman and the swing brakeman were on the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The engineer said that when he took action to stop his train on the siding he thought the switch lamp at the east siding-switch displayed a green aspect, which indicated that his train was into clear and that the switch had been lined to normal position. He then extinguished the headlight. The employees on the engine took no further action to determine whether their train was into clear, and they were not aware of anything being wrong until after the collision occurred. The flagman said that when his train stopped he gave proceed signals with a lighted white lantern from a point near the east switch. Then, because the train was not moved westward, he communicated with the train dispatcher by telephone from

a booth near the switch, and informed him that Second 49 was not into clear. Immediately afterward, he saw the reflection of the headlight of Extra 714 East closely approaching, heard the engine of that train working steam, and called a warning to the conductor of his train. The conductor was attempting to light a fusee to give warning signals to the enginemen of Extra 714 East when the collision occurred. The marker lamps on the caboose of Second 49 were lighted, and they displayed yellow to the front and sides and red to the rear. After the accident it was ascertained that the conductor of a west-bound freight train had observed that the switch lamp at the east siding-switch at Oakland was not lighted when his train passed the switch about 1 hour 40 minutes before the collision occurred. Prior to the time the accident occurred, no member of the crew of Second 49 observed that the switch lamp was not lighted.

As Extra 714 East was approaching Oakland the speed was about 30 miles per hour, and the headlight was lighted brightly. The enginemen were in their respective positions in the cab, the front brakeman was seated behind the engineer and the swing brakeman was in the coal compartment of the tender. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. Each member of the crew had read train order No. 25, and each understood that his train was required to remain clear of the east siding-switch at Oakland until Second 49 was into clear on the siding. When the engine of Extra 714 East was in the vicinity of the west siding-switch the engineer and the front brakeman identified the engine on the siding as being the engine of Second 49 and, because the headlight of Second 49 was extinguished, they thought the train was into clear on the siding. The speed of Extra 714 East was 32 miles per hour when the engine was in the immediate vicinity of the east siding-switch, then the engineer saw the rear portion of Second 49 occupying the turnout, and he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. The fireman and the swing brakeman were killed. The conductor and the flagman said that, because the speed of their train was not materially reduced after their engine passed the engine of Second 49, they thought their enginemen had knowledge that Second 49 was into clear on the siding.

This carrier's book of operating rules contains manual-block rules which provide for the blocking of both opposing and following movements, but the manual-block system in use in the territory involved applies to following movements only. This carrier has authorized the installation of a centralized-traffic-control system in this territory, and construction work is now in progress.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifteenth day of March, 1948.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.