

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

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ACCIDENT ON THE

NEW YORK, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD

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SHEFFIELD, OHIO

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AUGUST 7, 1936

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2089

SUMMARY

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Railroad: New York, Chicago & St. Louis  
Date: August 7, 1936  
Location: Sheffield, Ohio  
Kind of accident: Collision  
Trains involved: Extra : Work Extra  
Engine numbers: 205 : 613  
Consist: 9 cars & caboose : 6 cars, rail loader and caboose  
Speed: 4-5 m.p.h. : stopped  
Track: 8° curve, 0.33 percent descending grade eastward  
Weather: clear  
Time: 4:05 p.m.  
Casualties: 2 killed, 4 injured  
Cause: Cars shunted onto side track without crew first having ascertained condition of side track

September 17, 1936

To the Commission:

On August 7, 1936, there was a collision between a cut of moving cars and a work train on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad near Sheffield, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 4 employees. The investigation of this accident was held in conjunction with a representative of the Ohio State Public Utilities Commission.

#### Location and method of operation

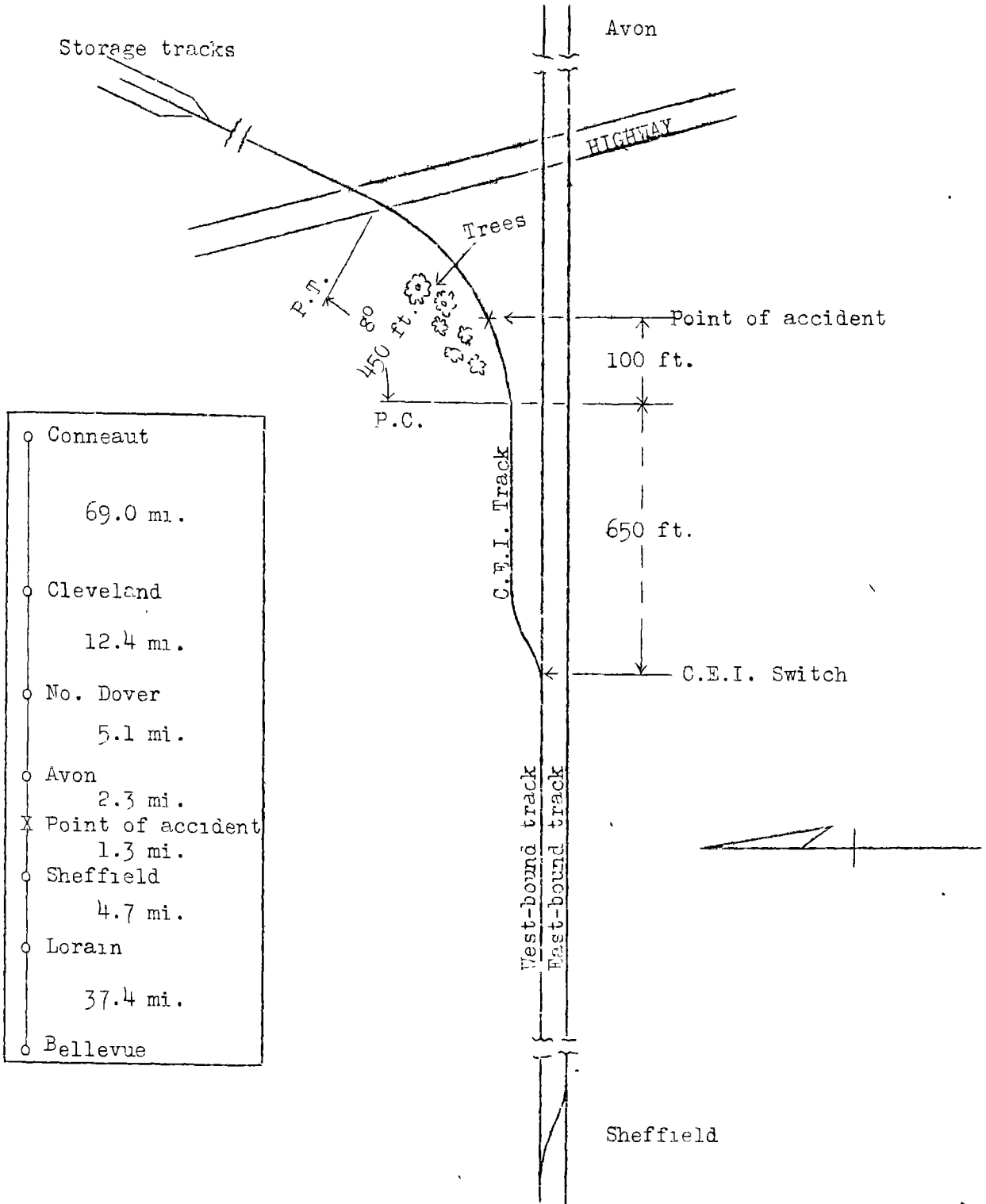
This accident occurred on the Cleveland Division, which extends between Conneaut and Bellevue, Ohio, a distance of 132.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system; extra trains require running orders and work trains require work orders. The accident occurred on a side-track leading off the west-bound main track to the north, through a trailing point switch located about 19.8 miles west of Cleveland, or 2.3 miles west of Avon and 1.3 miles east of Sheffield. This track, known as the C.E.I. track, joins two storage tracks serving the Cleveland Electric Illumination power plant at Avon Lake, the storage tracks being located about 2,000 feet from the main track switch. The C.E.I. track parallels the main track on a tangent for a distance of about 650 feet then curves to the left on an 8° curve for a distance of 450 feet to the center of a highway crossing and is then tangent for a distance of 900 feet to the storage tracks. Due to trees on the inside of the curve, the view of the track ahead is restricted to a distance of approximately 350 feet from either direction; the grade is slightly descending eastward and is about 0.33 percent at the point of accident, which occurred at a point 750 feet from the main-track switch and 100 feet east of the west end of the curve.

Employees using auxiliary tracks are required to know the condition of the tracks before using them and are also required to operate under control while occupying such tracks.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 4:05 p.m.

#### Description

Lorain yard engine 205, headed east and hauling 8 loaded gondolas, 1 empty box car and a caboose, in the order named,



Inv. No. 2089  
N.Y.C. & St.L.R.R.  
Sheffield, Ohio  
August 7, 1936

was in charge of Conductor Butz and Engineman Newbold. This train left Lorain at 2:49 p.m., according to the train sheet, crossed over to the west-bound main track at Sheffield and moved eastward over this track to the C.E.I. track; a running switch of the train was made while moving at a speed of about 15 miles per hour and it was shunted onto the C.E.I. track at a speed of from 6 to 8 miles per hour, with one trainman in charge of the hand brakes, and the cars collided with the caboose of a work train which was occupying that track.

Work Extra 613, in charge of Conductor Rice and Engineman Gunion, left Cleveland at 6:35 a.m., according to the conductor's train delay report, with the following Form 17 train order:

Work extra engine 613 will work from  
6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. between  
Cleveland and Lorain protecting itself.

After leaving Cleveland, this crew performed work on the west-bound main track between Dover and the C.E.I. track until about 2:40 p.m., at which time the train entered the C.E.I. track to make a shift in the train and to unload track material. After making the shift, the train was made up from east to west as follows: 1 steel gondola, engine 613 headed west, 1 steel gondola, 1 rail loader, 1 steel gondola, 1 steel under-frame gondola, 2 wooden gondolas with steel center sills and 1 steel under-frame caboose.

When the work was completed, the most of which was done with the caboose standing just east of the road crossing, the train was backed toward the main track switch at a speed of about 3 or 4 miles per hour and had moved a distance of about 450 feet when the caboose was struck by the approaching cars from Extra 205.

The head end of the leading car of Extra 205 was derailed; the caboose of Work Extra 613 was turned over to the south of the track, the gondola next to the caboose was demolished and the wreckage strewn on both sides of the track, while the next gondola was derailed and damaged to such an extent that it was afterward destroyed.

The employees killed and injured were maintenance of way employees who were in the gondola next to the caboose of the work train.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Butz stated that at Lorain he received an order authorizing his engine to run extra from Lorain to Sheffield and return. His train consisted of 8 loaded gondolas and an empty box car for the C.E.I. track, and a caboose; it was delayed 50 minutes behind a preceding train at Sheffield and while so delayed the air was bled from the cars in his train and the angle cock turned behind the engine preparatory to making a running switch at the C.E.I. track. He talked with the train dispatcher at Sheffield and was advised that the work train was working in the vicinity of Avon and to look out for them as they would tie up at Lorain or Cleveland. His train crossed to the west-bound main track at Sheffield and proceeded to the C.E.I. track against the current of traffic and when nearing the C.E.I. track the engine was cut off and the cars were shunted onto that track while moving at a speed of about 6 miles per hour. He was in charge of the brake on the forward end of the leading car and one of his brakemen was riding on the front step of the left side of the same car. When the cars had traveled a distance of about 8 car lengths on the C.E.I. track, he saw the work train approaching about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  car lengths away and he immediately applied the hand brake on the car he was riding and jumped before the collision occurred; he estimated the speed of the cars to have been about 4 or 5 miles per hour when they collided and said that he would have been able to stop them within an additional distance of 8 or 9 car lengths. Due to the curve and the trees on the inside of the curve, the view of the track ahead was restricted to about 300 feet. He stated that he had no order giving him authority to operate east of Sheffield but that it was understood when he received the line-up from the train dispatcher at Sheffield that he would use the west-bound main to the C.E.I. track. His train was not preceded by a flagman but moved on the information given him by the train dispatcher, keeping a close watch ahead for other trains. He had been on this run for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years and this was the customary method of doing the work; whenever he had less than 12 cars to deliver, the air was bled from the cars at Sheffield and the cars were handled to the C.E.I. track without air, and a running switch was made, as in this instance, to avoid a delay in running around the cars at Sheffield. However, when there were more than 12 cars to deliver, the cars were placed ahead of the engine at Sheffield and shoved into the C.E.I. track, with the air brakes in operation. He understood that the law requires the air brakes to be in operation when making a main track movement between two points, but he frequently handles cars between Sheffield and the C.E.I. track without air.

Brakeman Ernst stated that he made the cut between the engine and cars when making the running switch, then dropped off the engine at the C.E.I. track and handled the switch to shunt the cars into that track, after which the engine was backed over the switch and he then noticed that the cars had collided and had suddenly stopped. At about 9:10 a.m. he was given a line-up of trains by the dispatcher and was advised that the work train was then working between North Dover and Avon; this was the last information he had received regarding that train.

Brakeman Fulkwider corroborated the statement of Conductor Butz regarding the movements and handling of the train from its arrival at Sheffield until the time of the accident but added nothing further of importance.

Engineman Newbold stated that his engine was cut off the train when approaching the C.E.I. track at a speed of about 15 miles per hour and that the cars entered that track at a speed of 6 or 8 miles per hour; his engine ran beyond the switch for a distance of 4 or 5 car lengths and waited while the cars ran into the side-track; while waiting he looked across to that track but did not see the work train. He had worked on this run previously but this was his first day on that job for some time and he said that when there are but a few cars in the train it is customary to handle cars between Sheffield and the C.E.I. track without the air brakes being in service.

Fireman Wilcox stated that he also looked across to the C.E.I. track while his engine was waiting for the cars to enter that track but he did not see anything of the work train at that time.

Conductor Rice stated that after performing ordinary work-train work between Dover and the C.E.I. track, his train entered that track at about 2:30 or 2:40 p.m., and the main-track switch was left set for a main track movement. Track material was unloaded just beyond the highway crossing, a shift was made in the train and the work was completed at 4:00 p.m. The train was then backed toward the main-track switch at a speed of about 3 miles per hour; Conductor Rice was on the forward steps of the caboose on the engineman's side of the train and after moving about 5 car lengths he saw a cut of cars approaching about 8 car lengths away and he immediately gave stop signals, then jumped to the ground and ran toward his engine, still giving stop signals and shouting for the workmen to get off the train. His train was stopped about 30 seconds after he gave the first stop signal and before the approaching cars had collided with his train. He said that the train line is closed beyond the rail loader when the loader is being used, due to the fact that

the locomotive is unable to supply sufficient air to keep the brakes released. He did not know at the time whether the air brakes were in operation throughout the entire train when the back-up movement was begun but he intended to make sure that they were in operation before entering the main track; however, he would not have attempted to apply the brakes in emergency from the caboose when he saw the approaching cars, even though the air had been working throughout the train, because he knew that if this were done a collision would occur while the brakes were being released.

Flagman Temple stated that after entering the C.E.I. track, track material was unloaded at a point about 6 car lengths east of the road crossing and a snift was made in the train. After switching the train the air brakes were cut in on the gondola ahead of the engine, only. Later the train was backed up until the caboose was just east of the road crossing and rails and tie plates were unloaded at that point. Upon completion of this work the train was moved toward the main track switch at a speed of about 4 miles per hour; during this movement he was on the leading platform of the caboose and after the train had moved a distance of about 4 or 5 car lengths, he saw the cut of cars approaching about 7 car lengths away and his own train was stopped within a distance of about 3 car lengths.

Brakemen Regan and Clemons corroborated the statements of other members of the crew relative to the movement of the work train while occupying the C.E.I. track and they also said that the work train was stopped within a distance of 2 or 3 car lengths after the conductor began giving stop signals and before the collision occurred.

Engineman Gunion stated that his train was moving at a speed of between 1 and 2 miles per hour when he saw the conductor running toward his engine, giving stop and back-up signals from the ground. He immediately applied the air brakes in emergency and the train was stopped within a distance of 10 or 15 feet, just about the time the collision occurred. It was his understanding that his train was to return to Avon on the west-bound main track against the current of traffic, which he said would be done after the conductor had obtained a line-up of trains from the train dispatcher at the telephone located at the main-track switch. Fireman Neubecker added nothing further of importance to the investigation.

Train Dispatcher Maloney stated that Engine 205 was given an order authorizing it to run extra from Lorain to Sheffield. At Sheffield, Conductor Butz asked him for a line-up on trains and stated that he wished to go to the C.E.I. track. Dispatcher



Maloney knew that the movement would be made on the west-bound track against the current of traffic and said that this was the customary method of making the movement and he knew that the line-up he gave would be used as authority for the movement and he expected that the crew would watch out to see where trains were and protect accordingly, which practically amounted to "smoking" their way over. He gave Conductor Butz a line-up and informed him that Work Extra 613 was in the vicinity of Avon and would go west from that point.

Superintendent Peffer stated that employees are required to know the condition of auxiliary tracks before using them and are also required to operate under control while using such tracks. Although the crew of the Lorain yard engine had been performing the work at the C.E.I. track for over 3 years, he was not personally acquainted with the manner in which the work was being handled; he further stated that he did not think the crew of Engine 205 was provided with a copy of the work order held by the work train, in this instance.

#### Discussion

Work Extra 613 entered the C.E.I. track at about 2:30 p.m., and the main-track switch was closed and locked for a main-track movement and the derail was left in the derailing position. After working until about 4:00 p.m. the train was backed westward on the side track at a speed of about 3 or 4 miles per hour when a cut of cars was seen approaching at a distance of 7 or 8 car lengths. Stop signals were given immediately and the work train was stopped before the collision occurred. Extra 205 had an order authorizing it to run extra from Lorain to Sheffield and return, which was within the working limits of Work Extra 613, but Engine 205 was not given a copy of the order held by the work train, as required by rule. Upon arrival at Sheffield, Conductor Butz was given a line-up on trains and Extra 205 crossed over to the west-bound track and moved against the current of traffic to the C.E.I. track, a distance of about 1.3 miles, without authority and without flag protection, depending for protection upon the view to be had of approaching trains. This movement was in accordance with customary practice and was known to the train dispatcher when he gave the line-up. Before leaving Sheffield the air was bled from the cars in the train and the cars were handled from that point without the air brakes being in operation on the cars, in violation of the Federal Safety Appliance Law. Rule 102, of the operating rules of this railroad, reads in part as follows: "It is positively forbidden to detach cars or engines from trains in motion except while switching at stations, or making up trains in yards." The Superintendent stated that employees are required to know the

condition of auxiliary tracks before using them, and are required to operate under control while using them. The engine of Extra 205 was detached from the train while in motion and the cars were shunted into the C.E.I. track, the crew not having first ascertained the condition of the track. It further appears that this practice has been followed for more than 3 years and that the Superintendent and Train Master were both unaware of the practice.

The investigation of this accident has disclosed a number of practices that were in direct violation of the operating rules, some of which have been followed for a number of years and were at least acquiesced in by the train dispatcher. This is the second fatal accident which has occurred on this railroad and has been investigated by this Commission within a period of two months, in which lax operating practices and a disregard of operating rules were involved, and accidents may be anticipated until such time as the operating officials awaken to the necessity of strict enforcement and observance of the rules.

#### Conclusion

This accident was caused by the crew of Extra 205 shunting cars into a side track without first having ascertained that conditions were such that the movement could be made with safety.

#### Recommendations

The recommendations appearing in our report covering the investigation of an accident which occurred on this railroad at Madison, Ill., on June 15, 1936, are repeated:

"It is recommended that the operating officials of this railroad take necessary steps to secure proper enforcement and observance of the rules."

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON.

Director.