

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3056

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
CHICAGO, SAINT PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS AND OMAHA
RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT ASHLAND JCT., WIS., ON
DECEMBER 31, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroads: Northern Pacific : Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha

Date: December 31 1946

Location: Ashland Jct., Wis.

Kind of accident: Side collision

Trains involved: D.S.S. & A. freight : C. St. P. M. & C. freight

Train numbers: 632 : 75

Engine numbers: 1050 : 361-240

Consists: 25 cars, caboose : 35 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 5 m. p. h. : 5 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders : Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; level : Single; 6° curve; 0.51 percent descending grade westward

Weather: Clear; 30° below zero

Time: 7:30 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed of C. St. P. M. & C. train approaching railroad crossing at grade

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3056

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

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
CHICAGO, SAINT PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS AND OMAHA
RAILWAY COMPANY

February 11, 1947.

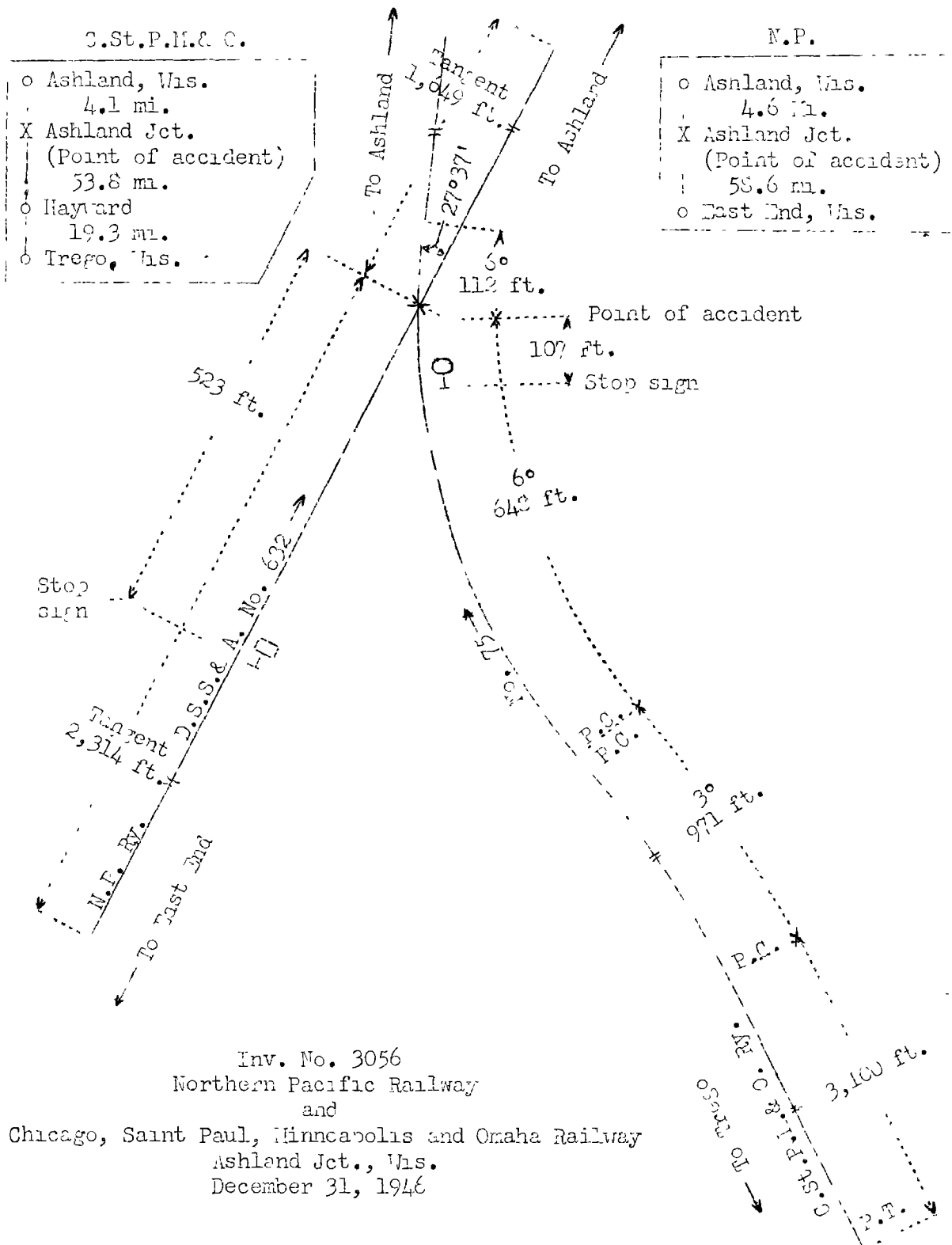
Accident at Ashland Jct., Wis., on December 31, 1946,
caused by failure properly to control the speed
of the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha
train approaching a railroad crossing at grade.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On December 31, 1946, there was a side collision between a Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic Railway freight train, which was being operated on the line of the Northern Pacific Railway, and a Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway freight train, at Ashland Jct., Wis. This accident resulted in the death of one employee, and the injury of three employees.

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. 3056
 Northern Pacific Railway
 and
 Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway
 Ashland Jct., Wis.
 December 31, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

The accident occurred at the intersection of a line of the Northern Pacific Railway and a line of the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway at Ashland Jct., Wis. The crossing is located on that part of the Lake Superior Division of the N.P. extending between East End and Ashland, Wis., 63.2 miles, and on that part of the Eastern Division of the C.St.P.M. & O. extending between Trego and Ashland, Wis., 77.2 miles. According to the timetables, Ashland Jct. is 58.6 miles east of East End and 73.1 miles west of Trego. In the vicinity of Ashland Jct. both are single-track lines, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use on either line. Trains of the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic Railway are regularly operated over the N.P. line. At the crossing the main track of the N.P. intersects the main track of the C.St.P.M. & O. at an angle of 27°37'. The N.P. main track extends northwest and southeast, and the C.St.P.M. & O. main track extends southwest and northeast. Timetable directions are hereinafter used in this report. The N.P. main track is tangent throughout a distance of 2,314 feet immediately west of the crossing and 1,649 feet eastward. The grade is practically level. From the east on the C.St.P.M. & O. there are, in succession, a tangent 3,100 feet in length, a 3° curve to the left 971 feet and a 6° curve to the right 648 feet to the crossing and 112 feet westward. The grade for west-bound trains varies between 0.51 percent and 0.95 percent descending throughout a distance of about 1 mile immediately east of the crossing, where it is 0.51 percent descending.

Stop signs governing movement of east-bound trains on the N.P. and west-bound trains on the C.St.P.M. & O. are, respectively, 523 feet west and 107 feet east of the crossing.

Operating rules of the N.P. read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

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

Note.--The definition of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as * * * stop signs * * *

* * *

98. Trains must approach * * * railroad crossings at grade, * * * prepared to stop, unless * * * track is clear. * * *

Operating rules of the C.St.P.M.& O. read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

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

* * *

NOTE * * * The definition of a "Fixed Signal" covers such signals as * * * stop boards * * *

98. Trains must approach * * * railroad crossings at grade, * * * prepared to stop, unless * * * track is clear. * * *

Description of Accident

No. 632, an east-bound second-class D.S.S.& A. freight train, consisting of engine 1050, 25 cars and a caboose, departed from East End at 3 a. m., 2 hours 45 minutes late, stopped with the front of the engine about 80 feet west of the stop sign located 523 feet west of the crossing at Ashland Jct., then proceeded, and while moving over the crossing at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour the right side of the engine was struck by C.St.P.M.& O. No. 75.

No. 75, a west-bound second-class C.St.P.M.& O. freight train, consisting of engines 361 and 240, 35 cars and a caboose, departed from Hayward, 53.8 miles east of Ashland Jct., at 5 a. m., 1 hour 30 minutes late, passed the stop sign located 107 feet east of the crossing at Ashland Jct., and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it struck D.S.S.& A. No. 632.

The engines of both trains were derailed. The cabs of the engine of No. 632 and the second engine of No. 75 were demolished, and these engines were otherwise badly damaged. The front end of the first engine of No. 75 was considerably damaged. The first two cars of No. 632 and the first three cars of No. 75 were derailed and damaged.

The engineer of the second engine of No. 75 was killed. The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of No. 632 were injured.

The weather was clear, the temperature was 30° below zero and it was daylight at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:30 a. m.

The feed valve of the first engine of No. 75 was adjusted to supply brake-pipe pressure of 70 pounds. Approximately 71 percent of the cars of No. 75 were equipped with AB-type brakes.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement over the crossing involved was 5.36 trains on the N.P. and 3.96 trains on the C.St.P.M.& O.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that No. 632 stopped at the stop sign governing east-bound movements on the N.P., then proceeded and was moving at a speed of about 5 miles per hour when the engine entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 75.

The engineer of No. 632 first saw No. 75 approaching when his engine was about 300 feet west of the crossing, but at that time he thought the speed of No. 75 was being controlled so that it could be stopped short of the stop sign governing west-bound movements on the C.St.P.M.& O. When the engine of No. 632 was about 100 feet west of the crossing the engineer realized that the speed of No. 75 was not being properly controlled, and he immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position in an unsuccessful attempt to stop his train short of the crossing.

As No. 75 was approaching Ashland Jct. the speed was about 35 miles per hour. The engineers of the first engine were maintaining a lookout ahead. The members of the train crew were in the caboose. The brakes of this train, which were in the charge of the engineer of the first engine, had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The engineer of the first engine said that when his engine was about 1 mile east of the crossing he made a 20-pound brake-pipe reduction, and a reduction of about 10 pounds at a point about 2,000 feet westward. The brake application was not released. He thought he had his train under proper control and that the engine would stop short of the stop sign, but when his engine was about 800 feet east of the crossing he realized that the speed was not being controlled properly. Then he moved the brake

valve to emergency position, in an unsuccessful attempt to stop short of the crossing. At that time the fireman warned him that a train was approaching on the N.P. The engineer of the second engine was killed. ~~After the accident there was no condition found that would prevent the proper application of the brakes.~~ *No test made*

Under the rules, No. 75 was required to stop before it passed the stop sign, then the speed was required to be so controlled that the train could be stopped short of the crossing unless the way was seen to be clear. Because of vegetation adjacent to the tracks of both railroads in the immediate vicinity of the crossing and an overhead highway bridge which extends over the tracks of both lines at the crossing, the view of a train moving in the vicinity of the crossing from an engine approaching on either line is materially restricted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha train approaching a railroad crossing at grade.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eleventh day of February, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.