

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3715
NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR IRONTON, MINN., ON
OCTOBER 18, 1956

- 2 -

SUMMARY

Date: October 18, 1956

Railroad: Northern Pacific

Location: Ironton, Minn.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Locomotive with caboose : Motor-truck

Train number: Extra 861 West :

Locomotive number: Diesel-electric unit :
861

Consist: Caboose :

Speeds: 32 m. p. h. : Undetermined

Operation: Operating rules

Track: Single; tangent; vertical curve

Private road: Tangent; crosses track at angle of
61°14'; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 1:55 p. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 2 injured

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

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3715

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

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

December 7, 1956

Accident near Ironton, Minn., on October 18, 1956, caused by a motor-truck occupying a grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

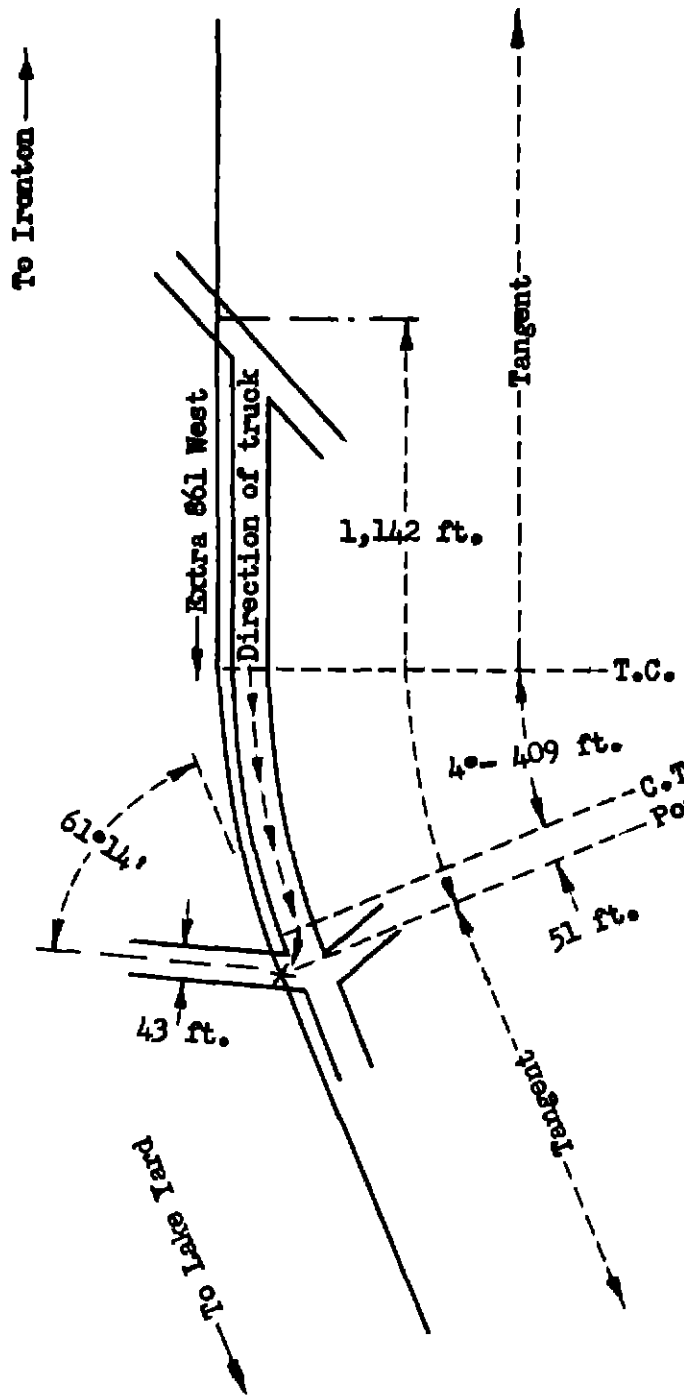
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On October 18, 1956, there was a collision between a motor-truck and a locomotive with caboose at a grade crossing on a joint line of the Northern Pacific Railway and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway near Ironton, Minn., which resulted in the death of two train-service employees, and the injury of the driver of the motor-truck and one train-service employee.

1

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.



- Ironton, Minn.
3.0 mi.
- X Point of accident
0.1 mi.
- Lake Yard, Minn.

Report No. 3715
 Northern Pacific Railway
 Ironton, Minn.
 October 18, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on a line which is jointly owned and operated by the Northern Pacific Railway and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway and which extends between Ironton and Lake Yard, Minn., 3.1 miles. Each railroad operates equipment over this line manned by its own crews. Movements are made in accordance with the rules governing movements within yard limits. Directions used on the railroad are east and west, and these directions are used in this report. The accident occurred at a point approximately 3 miles west of Ironton, where the railroad is crossed at grade by a private road. From the east on the railroad there are, in succession, a tangent over 1,000 feet in length, a 4° curve to the left 409 feet, and a tangent 51 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance westward. The accident occurred on a vertical curve between a 0.59-percent ascending grade and a 0.49-percent descending grade westward.

In the vicinity of the point of accident there are numerous private roads which have been built and are maintained by mining companies for their own use. One of these private roads crosses the railroad at grade at a point 1,142 feet east of the point of accident. Westward from this crossing, the road extends approximately parallel to the railroad on the south. It is surfaced to a width of between 30 and 40 feet, and the north edge is from 15 to 25 feet south of the track. At the crossing at which the accident occurred a second private road intersects this road and the railroad. The northeast angle of the intersection of the road and the railroad is 61°14'. These roads are approximately level with the track. The crossing at which the accident occurred is 43 feet in width. It is surfaced with rock to the level of the tops of the rails. At the time of the accident there was no railroad-crossing sign or other warning device at the crossing.

There is no specified maximum authorized speed for trains in the vicinity of the point of accident.

Description of Accident

Extra 861 West, a west-bound Northern Pacific train, consisted of a caboose and Diesel-electric unit 861. The locomotive was headed eastward and pushing the caboose. This train departed from a point about 1.9 miles west of the station at Ironton about 1:50 p. m., and while it was moving at a speed of approximately 32 miles per hour, as

indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck a motor-truck at a point 3 miles west of Ironton, where the railroad is crossed at grade by a private road.

The vehicle involved was a Euclid Model 46 TD dump truck owned and operated by Zontelli Brothers, Incorporated, Ironton, Minn. The driver was the sole occupant. The truck was 26 feet 1-3/4 inches in length, 10 feet 8 inches in height, and 11 feet 4-3/4 inches in width. The front of the dump body extended over the top of the cab. The truck weighed 44,000 pounds. It was powered by a 300-horsepower engine and was equipped with air brakes. This truck was not operated on public highways, and no license was required for either the truck or the driver. At the time of the accident the truck was empty. This truck moved westward on the private road which parallels the railroad on the south, turned to the right onto the private road which intersects the railroad at a point 3 miles west of Ironton, and while moving at an undetermined rate of speed it entered upon the crossing and was struck by Extra 861 West.

Extra 861 West stopped with the west end of the locomotive 126 feet west of the center-line of the crossing. The locomotive was somewhat damaged. The caboose was derailed and stopped against the north side of the locomotive. It was demolished. The motor-truck stopped on its side against the wreckage of the caboose. It was badly damaged.

The conductor and one brakeman were killed. One brakeman was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:55 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 5.4 trains. Approximately 110 motor-trucks passed over the crossing during a 24-hour period.

Diesel-electric unit 861 is of the road-switcher type. The caboose involved was constructed with a steel underframe and a wooden superstructure.

Discussion

The crew of Extra 861 West was assigned to mine-run service, and when the accident occurred the train was en route to the Monoco mine, a short distance west of the point of accident. As this train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in their respective positions in the control compartment of the locomotive, the conductor was in the caboose, and two brakemen were on the platform at the west end of the caboose. The enginemen said that the grade-crossing whistle signal was sounded for both the crossing east of the point of accident and the crossing at which the accident occurred, and that the locomotive bell was ringing during this time. The engineer said that the motor-truck crossed the track at the crossing east of the point of accident after the train had passed. The truck was moving faster than the train, and it passed the train between the two crossings. The engineer said that there was no apparent reduction in the speed of the truck as it approached the intersecting road, and it appeared that it would continue on the road which parallels the track. He saw the truck turn toward the right onto the intersecting road, and he then made an emergency application of the brakes. The collision occurred at approximately the same time that he made the brake application. The conductor and one of the brakemen were killed. The surviving brakeman said he did not see the truck until it turned toward the crossing immediately before the accident occurred.

The driver of the truck was so seriously injured in the accident that he was not questioned during this investigation. On the day of the accident he was engaged in hauling iron ore from a mine to a chemical plant at Riverton, Minn., and at the time of the accident he was returning to the mine. He had been employed in this capacity during a period of approximately 4 years.

Between the two crossings there are no obstructions to the range of vision between a vehicle moving on the road and an approaching west-bound train. However, from the driver's position in the truck involved in this accident the view of objects to the right behind the cab of the truck would be obstructed by the front end of the dump body.

- 8 -

Cause

This accident was caused by a motor-truck occupying a grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of December, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McGOY,

Secretary.