

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3374  
PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT LOS ANGELES, CALIF., ON  
OCTOBER 10, 1950

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SUMMARY

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Date: October 10, 1950

Railroad: Pacific Electric

Location: Los Angeles, Calif.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: Extra 1611 North : 2113

Engine numbers: Electric loco- :  
tive 1611

Consists: 10 cars, caboose : 2 multiple-unit  
passenger cars

Estimated speeds: Standing . 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and operating rules

Tracks: Four; tangent; 1 percent descending  
grade northward

Weather: Dense fog

Time: 6:11 a. m.

Casualties: 50 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed of  
the following train in accordance  
with flagman's instructions

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3374

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

PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY

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January 5, 1951

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Accident at Los Angeles, Calif., on October 10, 1950, caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train in accordance with flagman's instructions.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

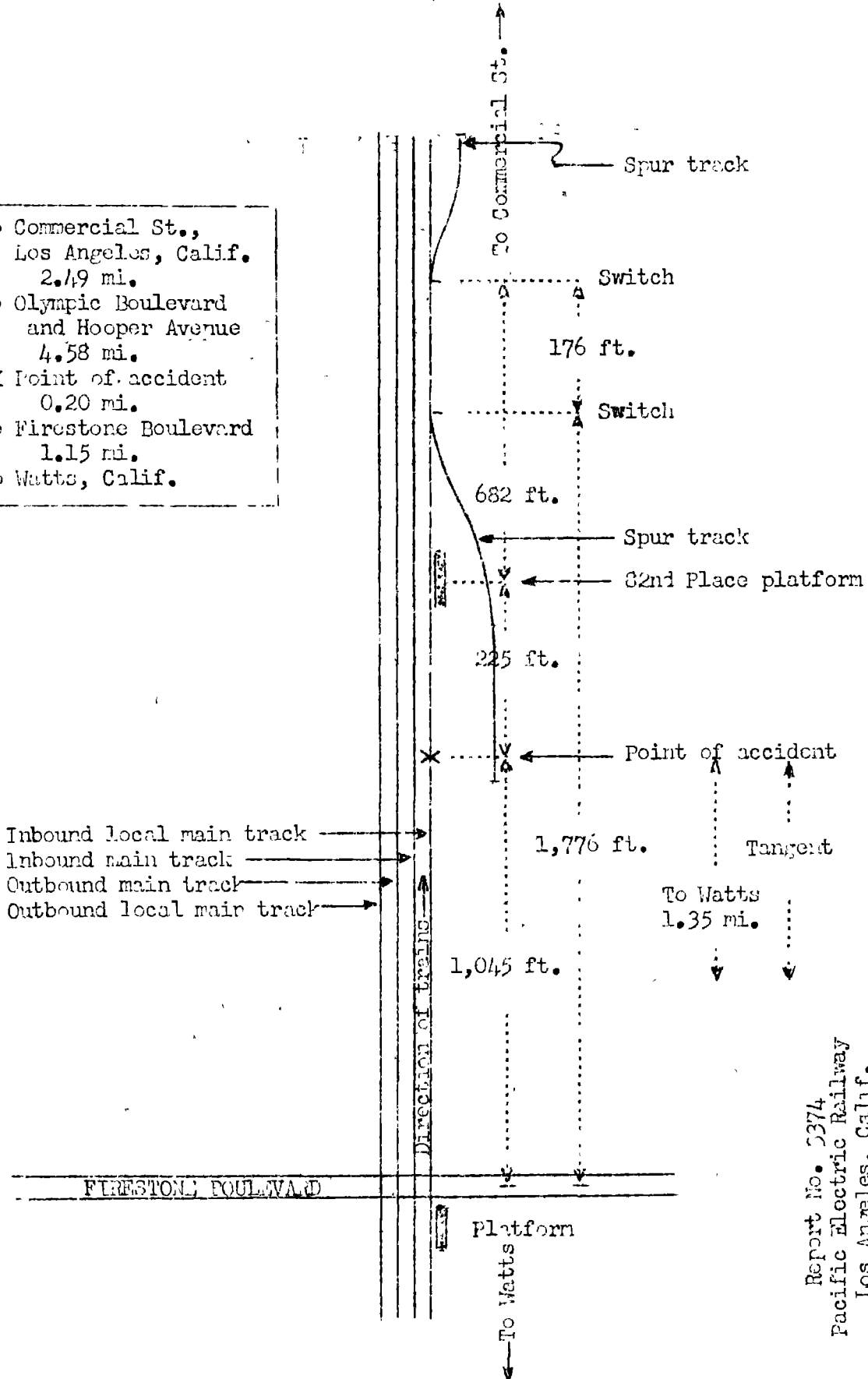
On October 10, 1950, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Pacific Electric Railway at Los Angeles, Calif., which resulted in the injury of 48 passengers and 2 employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Railroad Commission of the State of California.

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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.

- o Commercial St.,  
Los Angeles, Calif.  
2.49 mi.
- o Olympic Boulevard  
and Hooper Avenue  
4.58 mi.
- X Point of accident  
0.20 mi.
- o Firestone Boulevard  
1.15 mi.
- o Watts, Calif.



Report No. 3374  
 Pacific Electric Railway  
 Los Angeles, Calif.  
 October 10, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern District extending between Watts and Commercial Street, Los Angeles, Calif., 8.42 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a 4-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable and operating rules. There is no block system in use. This line is equipped with an overhead trolley system for electric propulsion of trains. The main tracks from east to west are designated as inbound local, inbound main, outbound main, and outbound local. Platforms at which trains may receive and discharge passengers are located at Firestone Boulevard, 1.15 miles north of Watts, and at 82nd Place, 1.39 miles north of Watts. Two spur tracks connect with the inbound local track at points 506 feet and 682 feet north of 82nd Place. The more southerly switch is trailing-point and the other switch is facing-point for north-bound movements. The accident occurred on the inbound local track 1.35 miles north of Watts and 731 feet south of the south spur-track switch. The main tracks are tangent throughout a distance of 1,050 feet immediately south of the point of accident and a considerable distance northward. The grade is 1 percent descending northward.

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

DEFINITIONS

Under Control.

29. To run at reduced speed, according to conditions, prepared to stop short of a train, car, misplaced switch, derail, or other obstruction or before reaching a stop signal. Where conditions require, train must be preceded by a flagman.

76. The following signals must be used by flagmen:

\* \* \*

Night signals--A red light,  
a white light,  
torpedoes and fusees.

D-90. \* \* \*

(b) Passenger extra trains may run on the time of regular trains, other extra trains will clear the main track in time to prevent delay to regular trains when practicable, when regular trains are late such extra trains may proceed clearing main track for regular trains that are late as soon as practicable after they are in sight.

\* \* \*

91. (a) When the view is obscured by curves, fog, storms or other causes, motormen will reduce speed and operate his train under control as defined in Rule 29. This does not relieve trainmen from responsibility of protecting their train as required by the rules.

When the motorman's range of vision is restricted by curves, fog, storms or other causes, he must take extraordinary precautions. The safety of the train depends entirely on the motorman being able to stop within the distance he can see the track to be clear. Speed must always be sacrificed for safety and every precaution taken to insure the safety of the train.

\* \* \*

99. (a) When a train stops or is delayed under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the conductor or flagman will go back immediately and quickly, with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speeds were 55 miles per hour for passenger trains and 30 miles per hour for freight trains.

#### Description of Accident

Extra 1611 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of electric locomotive 1611, 10 cars and a caboose. This train passed Watts, the last open office, at 5:30 a. m., and stopped on the inbound local track about 5:40 a. m., with the front end of the train south of the south spur-track switch. The engine was detached and switching was performed on the spur tracks. About 30 minutes later the rear end was struck by No. 2113 at a point 1,045 feet north of Firestone Boulevard and 731 feet south of the south spur-track switch.

No. 2113, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of two multiple-unit passenger cars of all-steel construction. This train departed from Watts at 6:06 a. m., on time, and while moving on the inbound local track at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Extra 1611 North.

None of the equipment of either train was derailed. The front end of each car of No. 2113 was somewhat damaged, and the rear end of the caboose of Extra 1611 North was slightly damaged.

The motorman and one conductor of No. 2113 were injured.

It was dark and there was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred at 6:11 a. m.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that when a motorman's view is obscured by fog he is to operate the train at reduced speed, and to be prepared to stop short of a train ahead. The rules also provide that when a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train the conductor or the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection.

As Extra 1611 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the flagman alighted from the caboose and placed two torpedoes on the rail about 300 feet south of Firestone Boulevard. He then proceeded northward to the passenger platform at Firestone Boulevard and remained there until after No. 2113 departed. Extra 1611 North stopped with the front end of the train south of the south spur-track switch. The locomotive and several cars were detached from the train, and the crew then engaged in switching operations on the two spur tracks. When the collision occurred the conductor and the front brakeman were in the vicinity of the locomotive. They were not aware that No. 2113 had struck the rear end of their train until they were so advised several minutes after the accident occurred. The flagman said that the marker lights at the rear of the caboose were lighted when his train passed Firestone Boulevard and the conductor said that they were lighted after the accident occurred.

As No. 2113 was approaching Firestone Boulevard, the motorman was in his usual position at the front of the first car, and one conductor was in each car. The headlight was lighted. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The motorman heard the explosions of the two torpedoes which had been placed by the flagman of Extra 1611 North. The flagman of Extra 1611 North gave stop signals with a lighted fusee from a point near the north end of the passenger platform at Firestone Boulevard, and the train

was stopped at the platform. The flagman informed the motorman that Extra 1611 North was performing switching on the two spur tracks north of Firestone Boulevard and would clear the main track as soon as the switching was completed. The motorman said afterward that he understood from this conversation with the flagman that the preceding train was performing switching in the immediate vicinity of the spur track switches. No. 2113 regularly stops at 82nd Place for passengers, and the motorman said he assumed that he would overtake Extra 1611 North at some point north of 82nd Place. The flagman of Extra 1611 North did not know at what point the rear end of his train had stopped, because he had alighted from Extra 1611 North in the vicinity of Firestone Boulevard. The motorman of No. 2113 did not ask the flagman how many cars were in the train of Extra 1611 North, and the flagman did not volunteer this information. After No. 2113 departed from Firestone Boulevard the speed was increased to between 10 and 15 miles per hour. Because of the dense fog, the motorman did not observe the cabooses of Extra 1611 North until his train was closely approaching it. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, but the speed was about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train in accordance with flagman's instructions.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifth day of January, 1951.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.