

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2860  
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR PORT, PA., ON  
JANUARY 16, 1945

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SUMMARY

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Railroad:	Pennsylvania
Date:	January 16, 1945
Location:	Port, Pa.
Kind of accident:	Rear-end collision
Trains involved:	Freight : Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 4761 West : Extra 4727 West
Engine numbers:	4761 : 4727
Consist:	91 cars, caboose : 56 cars, caboose
Estimated speed:	Standing : 20 m. p. h.
Operation:	Automatic block and cab-signal systems
Track:	Double; tangent; 0.3 percent descending grade westward
Weather:	Snowing
Time:	4:36 a. m.
Casualties:	1 killed; 1 injured
Cause:	Failure properly to control speed of following train in accordance with signal indications

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2860

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

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY

March 5, 1945.

Accident near Port, Pa., on January 16, 1945, caused by  
failure properly to control the speed of the follow-  
ing train in accordance with signal indications.

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

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

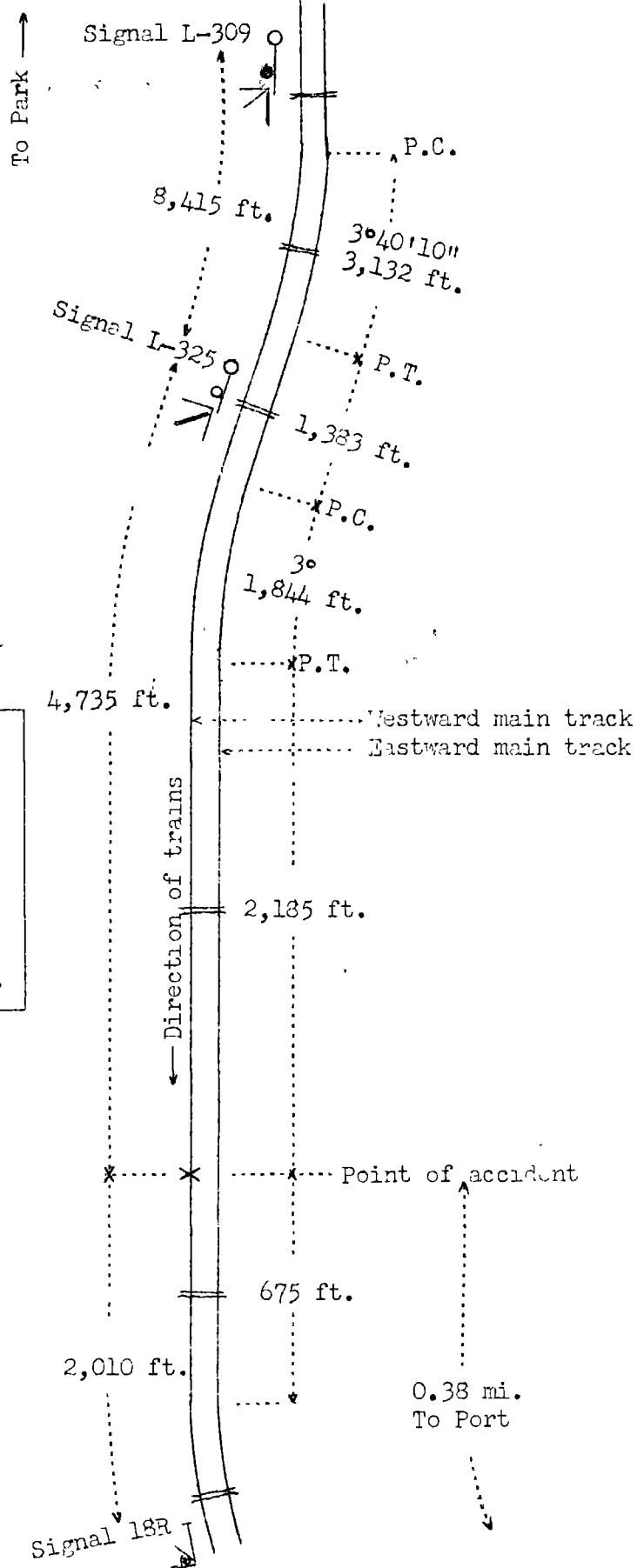
On January 16, 1945, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad near Port, Pa., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

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<sup>1</sup>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.

○	Park, Pa.
	22.20 mi.
○	Smith
	11.12 mi.
X	Point of accident
	0.38 mi.
○	Port
	16.90 mi.
○	Wago Junction, Pa.

↓ To Wago Junction



Inv. No. 2860  
 Pennsylvania Railroad  
 Port, Pa.  
 January 16, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Philadelphia Division designated as the Atglen and Susquenanna Branch and extending westward from Park to Wago Junction, Pa., 50.6 miles. This was a double-track line equipped with an overhead catenary system for the electric propulsion of trains. In the vicinity of the point of accident trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by automatic block-signal and cab-signal systems. The accident occurred on the westward main track 33.32 miles west of Park, at a point 0.38 mile east of the station at Port. From the east there were, in succession, a 3°40'10" curve to the right 3,132 feet in length, a tangent 1,383 feet, a 3° curve to the left 1,844 feet and a tangent 2,185 feet to the point of accident and 675 feet westward. The grade was 0.3 percent descending westward.

Automatic signals L-309 and L-325, and semi-automatic signal 18R, governing west-bound movements on the westward main track, were, respectively, 13,150 feet and 4,735 feet east and 2,010 feet west of the point of accident. These signals were of the position-light type, and were continuously lighted. The cab signals were of the four-indication, position-light type. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals were as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
L-309 and cab signal	Three white lights in diagonal position to the right.	Proceed prepared to stop at next signal. Train exceeding medium speed must at once reduce to that speed.	Approach.
L-325 and 18R	Three white lights in horizontal position above one white light.	Stop; then proceed at restricted speed.	Stop-and-proceed.
Cab signal	Two white lights in diagonal position to the left.	Proceed at restricted speed.	Restricting.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

\* \* \*

Medium Speed--Not exceeding one-half the speed authorized for passenger trains but not exceeding 30 miles per hour.

Reduced Speed--Prepared to stop short of train or obstruction.

\* \* \*

Restricted Speed--Not exceeding 15 miles per hour prepared to stop short of train, obstruction or switch not properly lined and to look out for broken rail.

11. A train finding a fusee burning red on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee and then proceed at reduced speed.

15. Torpedoes

The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to proceed at reduced speed. The explosion of one torpedo will indicate the same as two but the use of two is required.

\* \* \*

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

\* \* \*

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

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees.

When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

When conditions require, he will leave the torpedoes and a lighted fusee.

\* \* \*

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals.

\* \* \*

514. Except within interlocking limits, when cab signal indication changes to "restricting," a train or engine must at once reduce to not exceeding restricted speed.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the trains involved was 20 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

Extra 4761 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of electric engine 4761, 91 cars and a caboose, passed Smith, 11.5 miles east of Port and the last open office, at 3:50 a. m., and stopped at signal 18R, which displayed stop-and-proceed, then proceeded about 1,200 feet westward and stopped about 4:35 a. m., in response to signals given by the flagman of a preceding train. About 1 minute later the rear end of Extra 4761 West was struck by Extra 4727 West.

Extra 4727 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of electric engine 4727, 56 cars and a caboose, passed Smith at 4:10 a. m., passed signal L-309, which displayed approach, passed signal L-325, which displayed stop-and-proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck Extra 4761 about 4,735 feet west of signal L-325.

The caboose and the rear seven cars of Extra 4761, and the engine and the first three cars of Extra 4727 were derailed and damaged.

It was snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:36 a. m.

The fireman of Extra 4727 was killed, and the engineer was injured.

### Discussion

The flagman of Extra 4761 West said that when his train was preparing to stop at signal 18R he dropped a lighted 5-minute fusee about 2,000 feet west of signal L-325. When his train stopped at signal 18R he placed two torpedoes on the rail about 3,500 feet west of signal L-325. Then, after his train had proceeded westward about 1,100 feet, he saw the reflection of the headlight of an approaching train about 3,000 feet distant, and he immediately alighted and ran toward the approaching train. He was giving stop signals with a lighted fusee from a point about 300 feet to the rear of his train when the engine of Extra 4727 passed him.

As Extra 4727 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead

from the front control compartment, and the conductor and the front brakemen were in the rear control compartment of the engine. The air brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The engineer said he saw the approach indication displayed by signal L-309 and the stop-and-proceed indication displayed by signal L-325. In addition, the cab signal displayed approach in the vicinity of signal L-309 and restricting in the vicinity of signal L-325, and the audible signal in the control compartment was sounded and acknowledged when the engine was in the vicinity of each of these signals. The engineer understood that, under the rules, the approach indication required the speed of his train to be so controlled that the train could be stopped short of signal L-325, and, that since this signal displayed stop-and-proceed, his train was required to stop short of the signal and then to proceed prepared to stop short of a train or an obstruction. However, he said that he was engaged in cleaning snow from the front window of the control compartment to obtain a better view of the track ahead and as he did not hear any torpedoes explode or see a lighted fusee he took no action to control the speed of his train in accordance with the signal indications. He did not see the preceding train until just before the collision occurred. The flagman of Extra 4727, who was in the cupola of the caboose, said that he saw a lighted fusee in the vicinity of the front end of his train immediately before the collision occurred. If the speed of Extra 4727 had been controlled in accordance with the indications displayed by the signals involved, this accident would not have occurred.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train in accordance with signal indications.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fifth day of March, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.