

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2981
THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR SNOW HILL, MD., ON
MARCH 30, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Pennsylvania
Date: March 30, 1946
Location: Snow Hill, Md.
Kind of accident: Collision
Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck
Train number: 436 :
Engine number: 1278 :
Consist: 4 cars :
Estimated speed: 40 n. p. h. : Unknown
Operation: Timetable, train orders and
manual-block system
Track: Single; tangent; practically
level
Highway: Tangent; crosses track at angle
of 41°; practically level
Weather: Raining
Time: 2:25 p. m.
Casualties: 2 killed; 6 injured
Cause: Failure to operate a motor-truck
approaching railroad crossing
at grade in accordance with
requirements of law

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2981

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

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY

April 23, 1946.

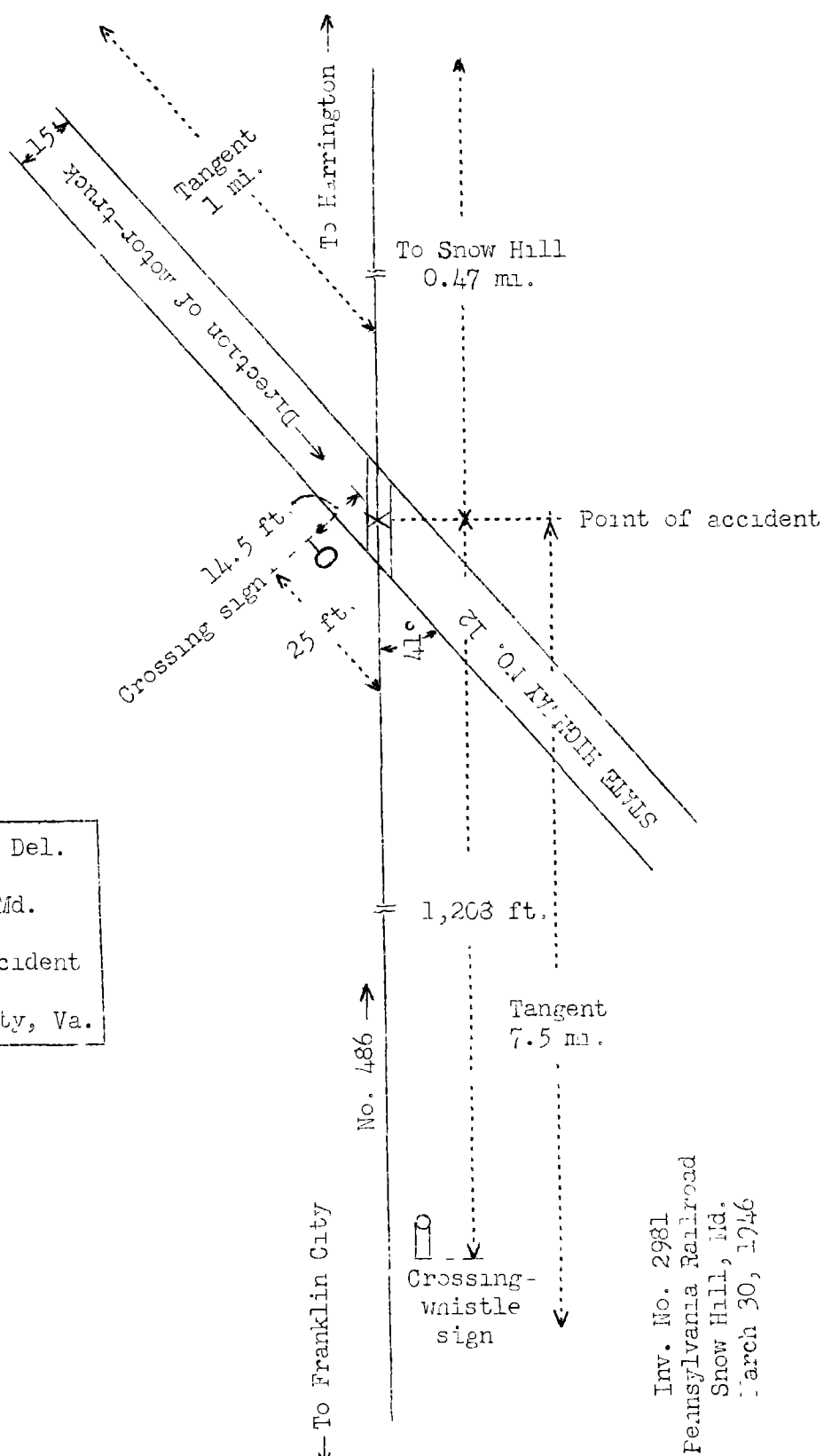
Accident near Snow Hill, Md., on March 30, 1946, caused
by failure to operate a motor-truck approaching a
railroad crossing at grade in accordance with re-
quirements of law.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 30, 1946, there was a collision between a
passenger train on the Pennsylvania Railroad and a motor-
truck at a highway grade crossing near Snow Hill, Md.,
which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-
truck and one train-service employee, and the injury of
two passengers, two persons carried under contract and two
train-service employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and
disposition.



- o Harrington, Del.
65.70 mi.
- o Snow Hill, Md.
0.47 mi.
- X Point of accident
12.03 mi.
- o Franklin City, Va.

Inv. No. 2981
 Pennsylvania Railroad
 Snow Hill, Md.
 March 30, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Delmarva Division extending between Franklin City, Va., and Harrington, Del., 79.2 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system. The accident occurred 12.03 miles north of Franklin City, at a point 0.47 mile south of the station at Snow Hill, where the railroad is crossed at grade by State Highway No. 12. The track is tangent throughout a distance of 7.5 miles south of the point of accident and 0.48 mile northward. The grade is practically level.

State Highway No. 12 intersects the railroad at an angle of 41°, and is surfaced with concrete to a width of 15 feet. The highway is tangent throughout a distance of more than 1 mile west of the crossing and a considerable distance eastward. The grade is practically level. The crossing is 15 feet wide, and is surfaced with asphaltum. Flangeways about 2-1/2 inches wide are provided. An oval-shape railroad-crossing sign 1.5 feet by 4 feet is located to the right of the direction of east-bound traffic, 25 feet west of the center-line of the track and 14.5 feet south of the center-line of the highway. This sign is mounted on a post 3.5 feet above the level of the highway, and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING STOP LOOK AND LISTEN" in black letters on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for north-bound trains is located 1,208 feet south of the crossing.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine Whistle Signals

Note--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds.
* * *

SOUND	INDICATION
* * *	
(1) ___ ___ o ___	Approaching public crossings at grade * * *
* * *	

Section 186(a) of the Motor Vehicle Laws of Maryland reads in part as follows:

The driver * * * of any vehicle carrying * * * inflammable liquids as a cargo * * * before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall come to a full stop within fifty (50) feet but not less than 10 feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and while so stopped shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train, * * * and shall not proceed until he can do so safely.
* * *

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 486, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 1278, a 4-4-2 type, one express car, one baggage car, one baggage-mail car and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Franklin City at 2:05 p. m., on time, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck on a grade crossing 0.47 mile south of the station at Snow Hill. The engine, the first three cars and the front truck of the fourth car were derailed.

The motor-truck involved was a tractor and semi-trailer, owned and operated by the Coastal Tank Lines, Inc., York, Pa. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Maryland chauffeur's license No. 130294. The tractor was a 1941 C40T Auto Car 6-cylinder model, and bore Pennsylvania license No. Y847D. It was equipped with dual tires on the rear wheels and air brakes on all wheels, and was provided with an enclosed steel cab. The semi-trailer was a Butler 1945 model, which had dual tires on its wheels, and was provided with air brakes. The semi-trailer was equipped with a steel tank. It bore Pennsylvania license No. M343. At the time of the accident the cargo consisted of 4,467 gallons of gasoline. This vehicle was moving eastward on State Highway No. 12 at an unknown speed when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 486.

The tractor was torn loose from the semi-trailer, and both units were demolished. The tank was punctured, and escaping gasoline became ignited. The engine of No. 486 overturned to the right and stopped with the front end about 320 feet north of the crossing. The derailed cars stopped practically upright and in line with the track. The front end of the engine was damaged in the collision, and the engine and the cars were damaged by fire.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:25 p. m.

The fireman was killed. The engineer and the assistant baggageman were injured.

During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:01 p. m., April 3, 1946, 639 automobiles, 278 trucks, 17 buses and 4 trains passed over the crossing.

Discussion

No. 486 was approaching the crossing at a speed of about 40 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 40 miles per hour. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The members of the train crew were in various locations throughout the cars of the train. The first these employees were aware of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency immediately prior to the accident. Several persons in the vicinity of the crossing heard the engine-whistle signal sounded for the crossing. The fireman was killed, and the engineer was so seriously injured in the accident that he could not be questioned during the investigation. Therefore, it could not be determined when they first became aware that the motor-truck had entered upon the crossing.

The investigation disclosed that the motor-truck involved was en route from Salisbury, Md., 19 miles northwest of Snow Hill, to the premises of the Sinclair Refining Company, located north of the highway and about 65 feet east of the crossing involved. An employee of the Sinclair Refining Company said that the motor-truck was about 30 feet west of the crossing and moving eastward on the highway at a slow rate of speed when he first observed the vehicle. At that time he heard the train approaching. The motor-truck proceeded, without stopping, and entered upon the crossing immediately in front of the train.

The laws of the state of Maryland governing the operation of motor vehicles require that a vehicle transporting inflammable liquids must stop before it proceeds upon a railroad track, and must not proceed unless it is safe to do so. The crossing involved was protected by a railroad-crossing sign. The driver of the motor-truck was an experienced driver and was familiar with the route. Visibility was not impaired by weather conditions, and the driver of the vehicle could have seen the approaching train throughout a considerable distance immediately south of the crossing. It could not be determined why the motor-truck entered upon the crossing immediately in front of the approaching train, as the driver was killed in the accident.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate a motor-truck approaching a railroad crossing at grade in accordance with requirements of law.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-third day of April, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.