

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2685
THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR BANNING, PA., ON
MARCH 11, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Pittsburgh & West Virginia
Date: March 11, 1943
Location: Banning, Pa.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Fourth 92 : Extra 6050 West
Engine numbers: 1105 : 6055
Consist: 41 cars, caboose : 38 cars, caboose
Estimated speed: 10-30 m. p. h. : 20-25 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 0.6 percent
descending grade eastward
Weather: Raining
Time: About 7:57 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured
Cause: Accident caused by failure to
obey a meet order
Recommendation: That the Pittsburgh & West Virginia
Railway Company install an adequate
block system on the line on which
this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2685

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

THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY

April 30, 1943.

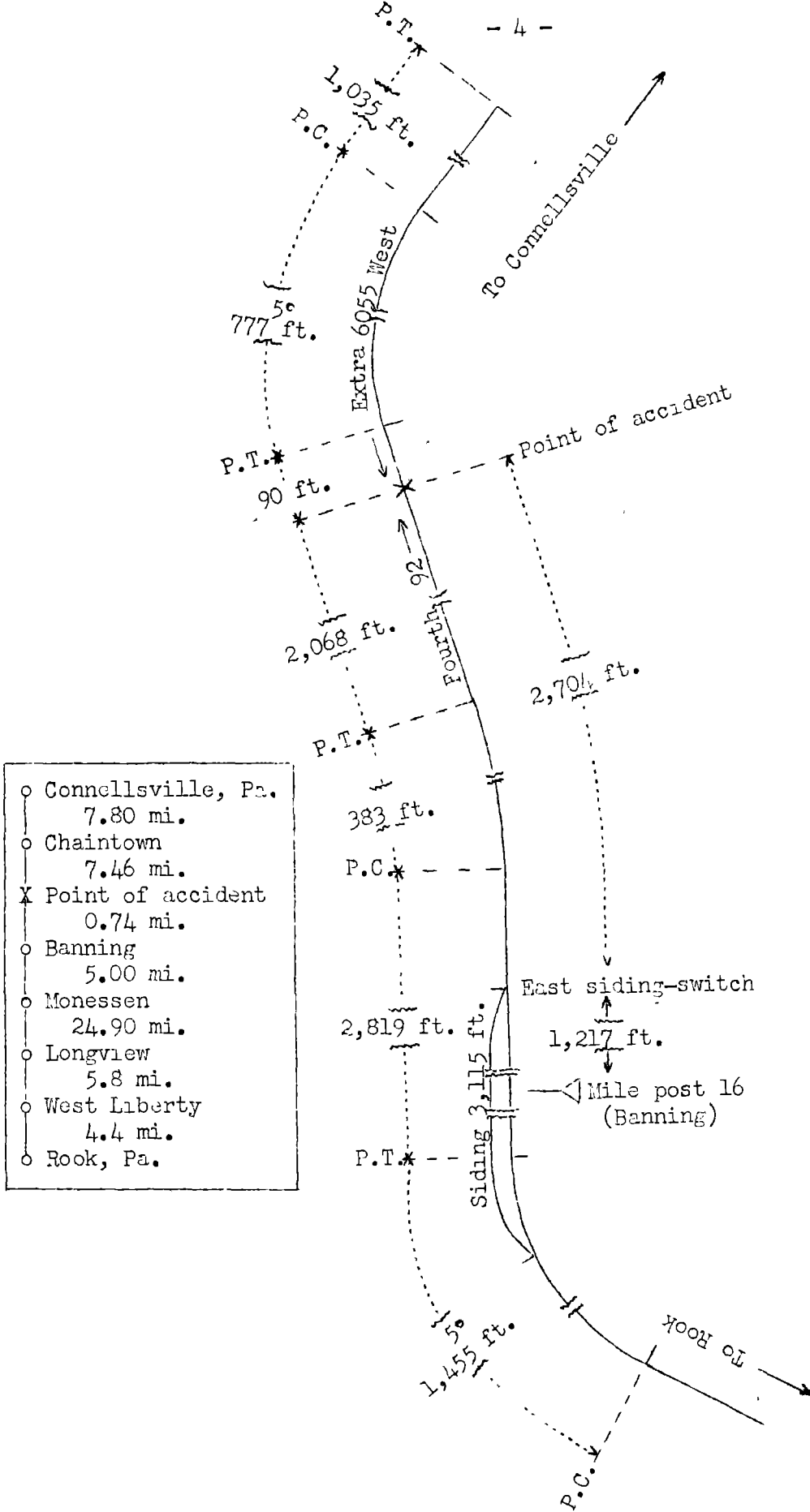
Accident near Banning, Pa., on March 11, 1943, caused by
failure to obey a meet order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On March 11, 1943, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway near Banning, Pa., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

¹Under 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.



- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| ○ | Connellsville, Pa. | 7.80 mi. |
| ○ | Chaintown | 7.46 mi. |
| X | Point of accident | 0.74 mi. |
| ○ | Banning | 5.00 mi. |
| ○ | Monessen | 24.90 mi. |
| ○ | Longview | 5.8 mi. |
| ○ | West Liberty | 4.4 mi. |
| ○ | Rook, Pa. | |

Inv-2685
 Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway
 Banning, Pa.
 March 11, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Connellsville Division, which extends between Rock and Connellsville, Pa., 56.1 miles. Engines of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway Company, hereinafter referred to as the W. & L. E., are regularly operated over this railroad but are in the charge of Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway crews. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Banning a siding 3,115 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The east switch of this siding is 1,217 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 2,704 feet east of the east siding-switch. Approaching from the west there are, in succession, a 5° curve to the right 1,455 feet in length, a tangent 2,819 feet, a 3° curve to the left 383 feet and a tangent 2,068 feet to the point of accident and 90 feet beyond. Approaching from the east there are, in succession, a tangent 1,035 feet in length, a 5° curve to the left 777 feet and the tangent on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade for east-bound trains is 0.6 percent descending.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

54. * * *
 * * *

Trains will stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on the siding.

221. (b) Delivered train orders will be accompanied by a Form A for each person to whom the orders are addressed, and the form will specify the numbers of the orders delivered.

* * *

Clearance card, Form A, reads as follows:

THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY

FORM A.

_____ Station, _____ 19 _____

Conductor and Engineman _____

1. I have no orders for _____

2. Orders Nos.		Have been delivered and there are no further orders for _____
----------------	--	---

3. All trains due at _____ M. have arrived and departed except _____

_____ Operator

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

* * *

A.

Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains.

1. * * *

No Five 5 Eng 331 meet Extra 901 East
at Derby.

* * *

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the Rules.

F.

Superseding an Order or a Part of an Order.

This order will be given by adding to prescribed form the words "instead of _____."

1. No One 1 Eng 448 meet No Two 2 Eng 447
at Acheson instead of Hickory.

* * *

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

89. * * *

* * *

d. * * * Trainmen and Enginemen must closely compare their train orders with form "A" clearance card and know that they have the specified train order numbers shown on the Clearance. * * *

In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for all trains is 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Fourth 92, an east-bound second-class freight train, departed from West Liberty, 35.7 miles west of Banning, at 5:31 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 11 hours 1 minute late. At Longview, 29.9 miles west of Banning, cars were added and this train, consisting of engine

1105, 41 loaded cars and a caboose, departed at 6:09 p. m., 11 hours 17 minutes late. At Monessen, 5 miles west of Banning, the crew received a clearance card and copies of train orders Nos. 160 and 164, Form 19, reading as follows:

160.

WLE Eng 6055 run extra Connellsville to West Liberty and meet Fourth 4th ninety two 92 Eng 1105 at Chaintown

164.

WLE Exa 6055 meet fourth 4th ninety two 92 Eng 1105 at Banning instead of Chaintown

Fourth 92 departed from Monessen at 7:44 p. m., 11 hours 43 minutes late, passed the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Banning, where it was required to wait unless Extra 6055 West was into clear, and while moving at a speed variously estimated as 10 to 30 miles per hour it collided with Extra 6055 West at a point 2,704 feet east of the east siding-switch at Banning. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Extra 6055 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of W. & L. E. engine 6055, 6 loaded and 32 empty cars and a caboose. At Connellsville, 16 miles east of Banning and the last open office, the crew received a clearance card and, among others, copies of train orders Nos. 160 and 164, Form 19. After an air-brake test was made Extra 6055 West departed from Connellsville at 7:15 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, and while moving at a speed estimated as 20 to 25 miles per hour, it collided with Fourth 92.

From an engine moving in either direction, in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view of a train approaching from the opposite direction is restricted to a distance of about 450 feet, because of an embankment at the south side of the track and track curvature.

The engine of Fourth 92 was derailed and stopped upright and in line with the track, with the front end about 105 feet beyond the point of collision. The front-end deck-casting, the cylinders of the No. 1 engine and the engine truck were demolished. The admission and the exhaust steam-pipes were broken. The first car of Fourth 92 was destroyed, and the second, third and fifth cars were slightly damaged. The engine of Extra 6055 was derailed to the south and stopped at an angle of 25 degrees to the track, with its front end on the roadbed at a point 107 feet east of the point of collision. This engine was practically

demolished. The cistern of the tender was torn from its frame and stopped at the rear of the engine cab and at right angles to it. The first, second and fifth cars were destroyed. The third car was badly damaged and the fourth, sixth, eighth, eleventh and nineteenth cars were slightly damaged.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:57 p. m.

The employee killed was the front brakeman of Extra 6055 West, and the employees injured were the front brakeman and the flagman of Fourth 92.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 14.66 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that at meeting points the superior train must stop clear of the switch to be used by the train that enters the siding. Train orders must be accompanied by a clearance card specifying the numbers of the train orders being delivered to a train. Enginemen and trainmen must compare train orders with the clearance card so that they will know the numbers of the orders intended for their train.

The crews of both trains involved held copies of orders Nos. 160 and 164. Order No. 160 established Chaintown as the meeting point between Fourth 92, an east-bound second-class train, and Extra 6055, a west-bound train. Order No. 164 superseded order No. 160 and established Banning, a blind siding 3.2 miles west of Chaintown, as the meeting point instead of Chaintown. Both crews held copies of clearance cards bearing information that orders Nos. 160 and 164 had been delivered to the trains addressed in the orders.

As Extra 6055 was approaching Banning the headlight was lighted, the engineer and the front brakeman were in their usual positions maintaining a lookout ahead, brake-pipe pressure of 75 pounds was being maintained, and the speed was about 30 miles per hour. The fireman was on the shoveling-sheet of the tender breaking lumps of coal. The members of this crew understood that their train was required to enter the east siding-switch at Banning to meet Fourth 92. As the engine was moving on a 5-degree curve to the left, the brakeman called a warning to the engineer that an opposing train was approaching. The engineer hesitated a short period, then extinguished the headlight, because he thought the approaching light was that of an automobile on an adjacent highway. Soon afterward he saw the reflection of

the approaching headlight on the rails, and, when the engines were about 200 feet apart, he moved the brake valve to emergency position, but he could not stop his train short of Fourth 92. The engineer estimated the speed as 25 or 30 miles per hour at the time of the collision. Since the front brakeman was killed in the accident, it could not be determined when he first saw Fourth 92. The first the conductor and the flagman were aware of anything being wrong was when the brakes were applied in emergency and the train stopped.

As Fourth 92 was approaching Banning the speed was about 40 miles per hour, the headlight was lighted, brake-pipe pressure of 75 pounds was being maintained, and the members of the crew on the engine were maintaining a lookout ahead. When the engine was about 5,000 feet west of Banning the engineer made a service application of the brakes, which reduced the speed to about 30 miles per hour, then he released the brakes. When the engine was about 1,000 feet east of Banning he made a 6-pound brake-pipe reduction and placed the brake valve in lap position. When the engine was about 3,000 feet east of Banning the speed was about 30 miles per hour, and the engineer observed Extra 6055 approaching at a distance of about 800 feet. He moved the brake valve to emergency position, but could not stop his train short of Extra 6055.

Orders Nos. 160 and 164 were delivered to Fourth 92 at Monessen, 5 miles west of Banning, about 7:40 p. m. Under the rules, Fourth 92 was required to stop short of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Banning unless Extra 6055 West was into clear. The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman read order No. 160 and understood that their train was to meet Extra 6055 West at Chaintown. Although order No. 164 was in the possession of the engineer during a period of about 17 minutes prior to the time of the accident and all members of the crew on the engine had handled this order, none had read it; therefore, they had no knowledge that the meeting point with Extra 6055 had been changed to Banning instead of Chaintown. The clearance card accompanying orders Nos. 160 and 164 bore information that these orders had been delivered. The members of the crew who were on the engine could give no reason why they failed to observe that two orders had been delivered and that the clearance card bore such information. If any member of the crew on the engine had read order No. 164, action could have been taken to stop Fourth 92 short of the east siding-switch and this accident would have been prevented. The conductor and the flagman read both orders and understood that Fourth 92 was required to stop short of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Banning if Extra 6055 was not into clear on the siding. When the engine was near the east siding-switch the flagman said he observed that Extra 6055 was not on the siding, and opened the conductor's emergency valve; however, members of the crew on the engine said they did not feel the effect of an emergency application of the brakes until after the engineer

placed the brake valve in emergency position. Under the conditions existing in the vicinity of Banning, the conductor and the flagman were not in a position to ascertain if Extra 6055 was on the siding until their engine had reached the east siding-switch.

In the territory involved in this accident there is no block system in use. If an adequate block system had been in use, the crew of Fourth 92 would have received additional information to direct their attention to the authority granted to the opposing train and this accident would not have occurred.

The carrier's rules for the testing of train air-brake equipment provide that a terminal test of the air-brake system must be made at an originating terminal. Information as to the condition of the brakes must be given to the conductor and the engineer after the test is completed. The investigation of this accident disclosed that before Extra 6055 departed from Connellsville, the only air-brake test made was an application and release of the brakes. The car inspector did not examine each brake to see if it applied and released properly and the only information given the engineer was a proceed lantern signal. There was no evidence that the brakes did not function properly en route. Nevertheless, Extra 6055 left Connellsville without the crew knowing the condition of the brakes of their train.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of April, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.