

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3219

THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR NEW ALEXANDRIA, OHIO, ON

DECEMBER 11, 1948

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SUMMARY

Railroad: Pittsburgh & West Virginia

Date: December 11, 1948

Location: New Alexandria, Ohio

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Maintenance-of-way : Freight service

Train numbers: Extra 928 East : 92

Engine numbers: 928 : Diesel-electric units 53 and 52

Consists: 8 cars, caboose : 75 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 2 m. p. h. : 20 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; 2° curve; 0.62 percent descending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 11:01 a. m.

Casualties: 4 injured

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 3219

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

THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY

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February 14, 1949

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Accident near New Alexandria, Ohio, on December 11, 1948,  
caused by failure to provide adequate protection  
for the preceding train.

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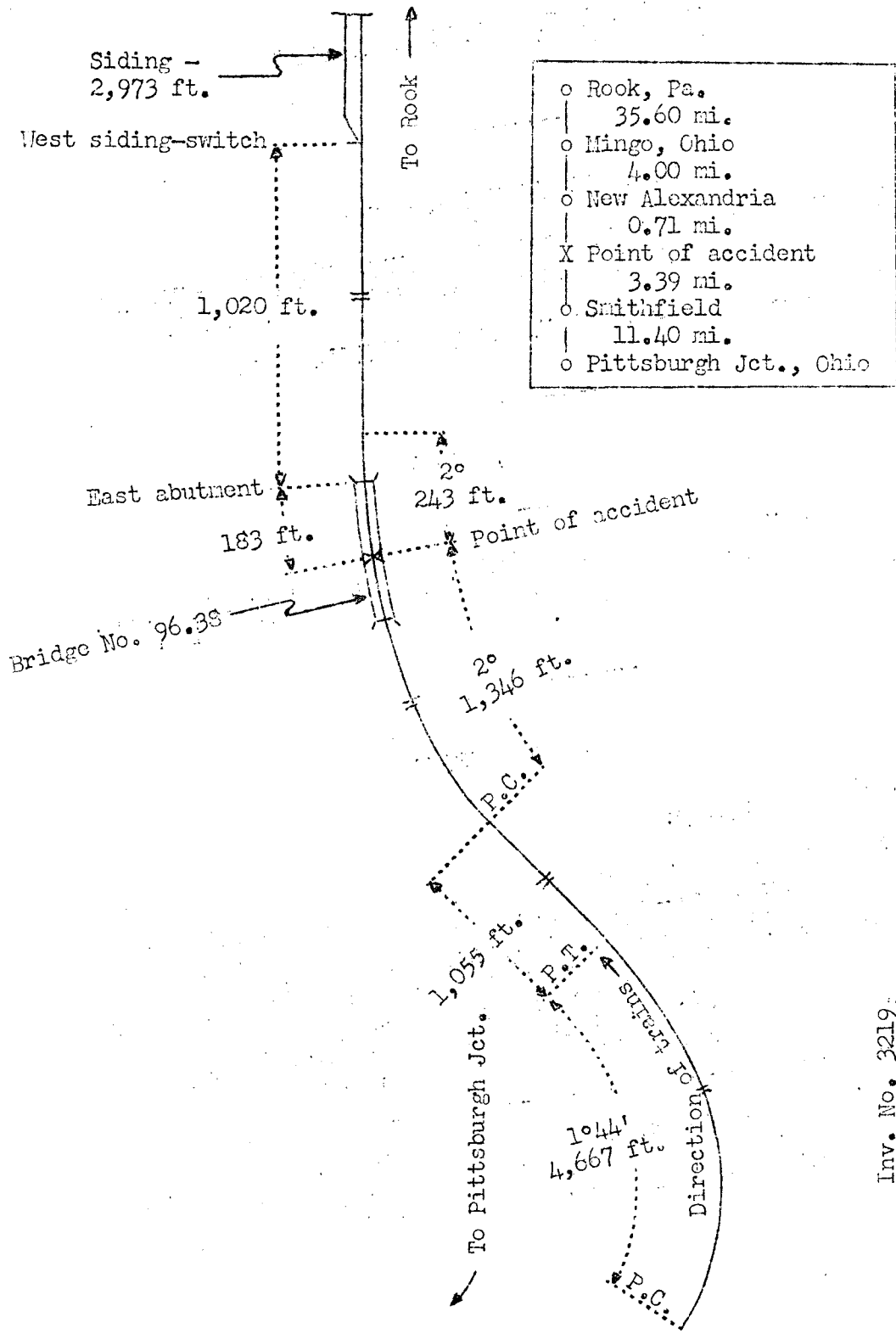
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On December 11, 1948, there was a rear-end collision between a maintenance-of-way service train and a freight train on the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway near New Alexandria, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of three train-service employees, and one maintenance-of-way employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

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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.



Inv. No. 3219  
Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway  
New Alexandria, Ohio  
December 11, 1948

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Pittsburgh Division, which extends between Pittsburgh Jct., Ohio, and Rook, Pa., 55.1 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At New Alexandria, 15.5 miles east of Pittsburgh Jct., a siding 2,973 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. This accident occurred on the main track at a point 1,020 feet west of the west siding-switch. From the west there are, in succession, a  $1^{\circ}44'$  curve to the left 4,667 feet in length, a tangent 1,055 feet and a  $2^{\circ}$  curve to the right 1,346 feet to the point of accident and 243 feet eastward. The grade varies between 0.7 percent and 0.62 percent descending eastward throughout a distance of 1.34 miles immediately west of the point of accident and is 0.62 percent descending at that point.

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

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day Signals--

A red flag,  
Torpedoes and fuses.

\* \* \*

44. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

49. \* \* \*

Trains of one schedule may pass trains of another schedule of the same class, and extra trains may pass and run ahead of third class and extra trains.

\* \* \*

50. Unless otherwise provided, an inferior train will clear the time of a superior train, in the same direction, not less than five minutes; \* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

99. (c) When work trains \* \* \* are performing work requiring flag protection, the flagman will be furnished written instructions, which will be shown to the engine-men of all trains flagged.

\* \* \*

Timetable special instructions read in part as follows:

15. Rules 49 and 50 are modified to the extent that Extra Trains may run ahead of Second and Third Class Trains.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 40 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

At Smithfield, Ohio, 11.4 miles east of Pittsburgh Jct., the crew of engine 928 received copies of train order No. 20 reading as follows:

Eng 928 run Extra Smithfield to Mingo  
No Ninety One 91 WLE Eng 6019 Wait  
at New Alexandria until Eight Fifty Five  
8 55 am

Mingo is 8.1 miles east of Smithfield. Extra 928 East, a work train, consisting of engine 928, headed westward, one coach, seven maintenance-of-way service cars and a caboose, in the order named, departed from Smithfield, the last open office, 4.1 miles west of New Alexandria, at 9:44 a. m. About 10:30 a. m. this train stopped at bridge No. 96.38 to load bridge ties, and, about 30 minutes later, when it had just started to move eastward, it was struck by No. 92.

No. 92, an east-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 53 and 52, coupled in multiple-unit control, 75 cars and a caboose, in the order named. This train departed from Smithfield, the last open office, at 10:55 a. m., 7 hours 4 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Extra 928 East.

No. 92 stopped with the front end of the first Diesel-electric unit at a point 719 feet east of the point of collision. The front wheels of the front truck of this unit were derailed to the north. The front end of this unit was badly damaged. The caboose of Extra 928 East was destroyed. The sixth, seventh, and eighth cars were derailed and badly damaged. The first, second, fourth and fifth cars were slightly damaged. The rear truck of the fifth car was derailed.

The fireman and the front brakeman of No. 92, and the flagman of Extra 928 East, who was in the control compartment of the first Diesel-electric unit of No. 92, and a maintenance-of-way employee were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:01 a. m.

#### Discussion

The crew of Extra 928 East had instructions to load maintenance-of-way equipment and materials at points between Smithfield and Mingo. The crew received copies of train order No. 20, which designated the movement as an extra train instead of a Work Extra. The conductor orally instructed the flagman to remain at Smithfield for the purpose of flagging No. 92, and to inform the engineer of No. 92 that Extra 928 East would be working between Smithfield and New Alexandria. The conductor further instructed the flagman to board the engine of No. 92 in returning to the work train. Extra 928 East departed from Smithfield at 9:44 a. m. and proceeded to a point 2.14 miles east of Smithfield, where a piece of heavy roadway equipment was loaded. About 40 minutes later this train proceeded eastward and stopped about 10:30 a. m., with the caboose standing on bridge No. 96.38, 5.39 miles east of Smithfield, where bridge ties were loaded into the second car from the engine by a maintenance-of-way force. During this time the engineer and the fireman were in the cab of the engine, which was headed westward, and the other members of the crew, except the flagman, were on the ground in the vicinity of the car which was being loaded. About 30 minutes after the work train had stopped at this point, the fireman saw No. 92 approaching and called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately released the brakes and started the engine in backward motion, but the train had moved only about 150 feet when the collision occurred.

As No. 92 approached Smithfield the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of this train and the flagman of Extra 928 East were in the control compartment of the first Diesel-electric unit, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The crew had received no train order restricting their train from proceeding at maximum authorized speed. No. 92 had stopped at Smithfield in response to the signals of the flagman of Extra 928 East. As the flagman was about to board the first Diesel-electric unit, he was informed by the operator at that station that Extra 928 East was at New Alexandria. From this information, and assuming that the conductor of Extra 928 East had called the operator

by telephone, the flagman told the engineer of No. 92 that Extra 928 East would be into clear at New Alexandria. No. 92 departed from Smithfield at 10:55 a. m. When the engine was about 1,500 feet west of the point where the collision occurred the speed was about 35 miles per hour, and the engineer made a brake-pipe reduction so that the flagman of Extra 928 East could alight at the west siding-switch at New Alexandria. Immediately thereafter the engineer observed that Extra 928 East was occupying the main track about 1,200 feet ahead. He then placed the brake valve in emergency position. The speed of the train had been reduced to about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The investigation disclosed that about 10:48 a. m. the conductor of Extra 928 East called the dispatcher from a telephone located near the west siding-switch at New Alexandria to obtain information concerning an approximate arriving time of No. 92. He informed the dispatcher that he was calling from New Alexandria, but at that time he gave the dispatcher no information as to the location of Extra 928 East. Without the knowledge of either the conductor or the dispatcher, the operator at Smithfield overheard this conversation and informed the flagman that Extra 928 East was at New Alexandria. The flagman said that his understanding of the instructions were to flag No. 92 and to inform the engineer of that train that Extra 928 East would be working between Smithfield and New Alexandria, unless the conductor called the operator at Smithfield, in which case Extra 928 East would be into clear at New Alexandria. When the operator at Smithfield informed him that Extra 928 East was at New Alexandria, the flagman said he assumed that the conductor had called the operator to inform him that Extra 928 East was into clear at New Alexandria for No. 92. The operator at Smithfield said that he had no knowledge of the instructions given the flagman and that he voluntarily informed the flagman that Extra 928 East was at New Alexandria so that it would not be necessary for No. 92 to proceed at restricted speed between Smithfield and New Alexandria. The rules require that, when a work train requires flag protection, the flagman will be furnished written instructions, which the flagman will show to the enginemen of all trains flagged. The conductor of Extra 928 East said he thought this rule was applicable only in the case where a train is designated as a Work Extra.



At the time the accident occurred, trains were being operated in the territory in question by timetable and train orders only. However, the carrier now is installing a centralized-traffic-control system in this territory.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourteenth day of February, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.