

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3108
THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ROCKDALE, W. VA., ON
JUNE 10, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: Pittsburgh & West Virginia

Date: June 10, 1947

Location: Rockdale, W. Va.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: W. & L. E. : P. & W. V.
freight : maintenance-of-
: way service
: train

Train numbers: Second 94 : Extra 927 West

Engine numbers: 917-6013 : 927

Consists: 56 cars, caboose : 5 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: 18 m. p. h. : 20 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.3 percent
ascending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:45 a. m.

Casualties: 9 injured

Cause: Failure to obey meet order

Recommendation: That the Pittsburgh & West Virginia
Railway Company install an adequate
block system on the line on which
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3108

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 8, 1910.

THE PITTSBURGH & WEST VIRGINIA RAILWAY COMPANY

July 10, 1947

Accident near Rockdale, W. Va., on June 10, 1947, caused
by failure to obey a meet order.

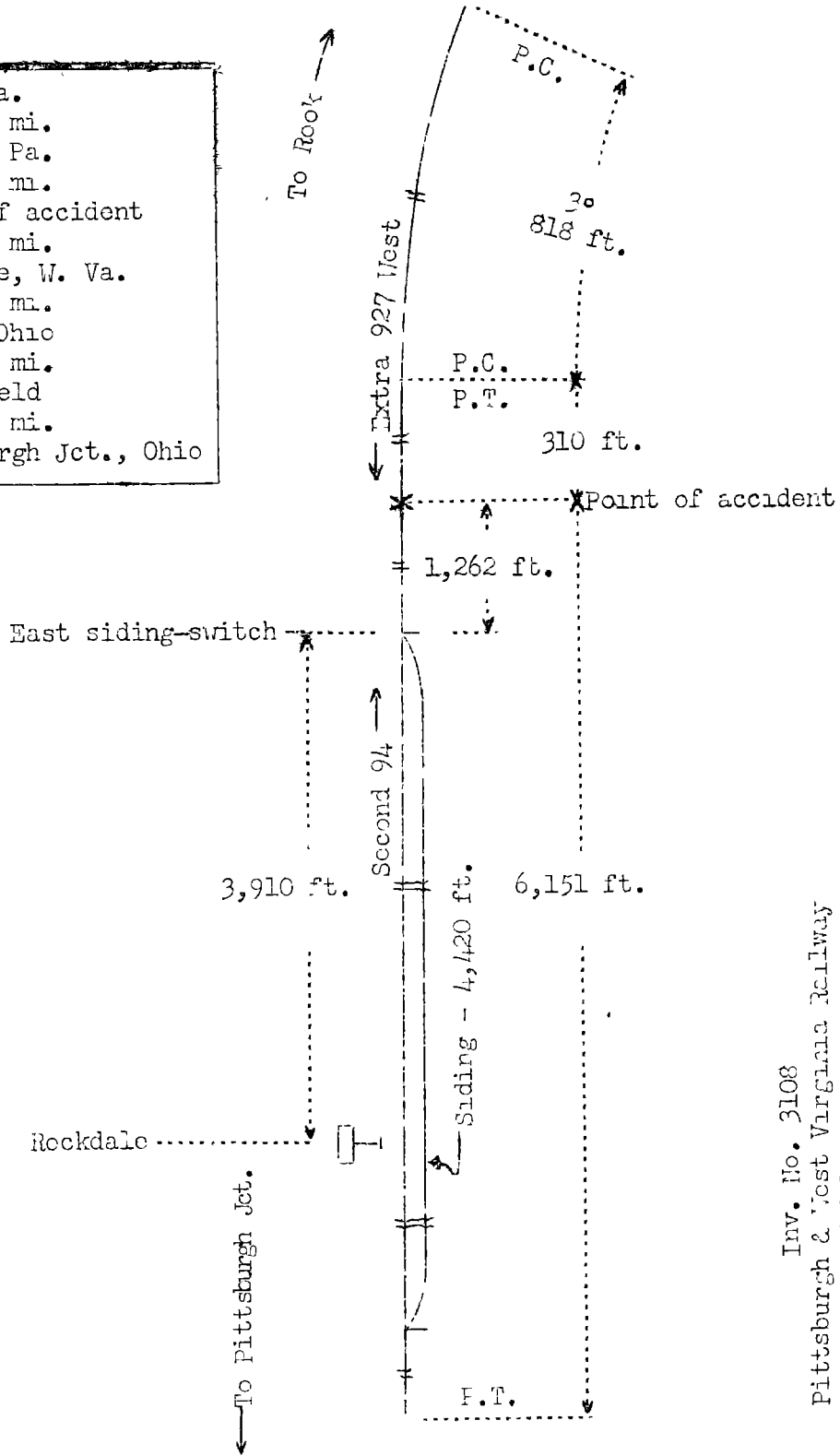
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 10, 1947, there was a head-end collision between a Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway freight train and a Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway maintenance-of-way service train on the line of the Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway near Rockdale, W. Va., which resulted in the injury of three maintenance-of-way employees and six train-service employees.

¹
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.

○ Rook, Pa.	26.20 mi.
○ Aveilla, Pa.	6.42 mi.
X Point of accident	0.98 mi.
○ Rockdale, W. Va.	2.00 mi.
○ Mingo, Ohio	8.10 mi.
○ Smithfield	11.40 mi.
○ Pittsburgh Jct., Ohio	



Inv. No. 3108
 Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway
 Rockdale, W. Va.
 June 10, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on the Pittsburgh Division, which extends between Pittsburgh Jct., Ohio, and Rock, Pa., 55.7 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Trains of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway are regularly operated over this division. At Rockdale, 21.5 miles east of Pittsburgh Jct., a siding 4,420 feet in length parallels the main track on the south. The east switch of this siding is 3,910 feet east of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 0.24 mile east of the east siding-switch. From the west the main track is tangent 6,151 feet to the point of accident and 310 feet eastward. From the east there is a 5° curve to the left 812 feet in length, and then the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.3 percent ascending eastward.

Operating rules of the P. & W. V. 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.
(a) o * * *	Apply brakes. Stop.

44. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

54. * * *

* * *

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

207. (a) When engines of foreign railways are run over the same main track, train orders will show initial of such railway, prefixed to engine numbers.

211. (a) * * * conductors of freight trains will show train orders to flagmen, and enginemen to firemen, and when practicable to the front trainmen, all of whom are required to bear them in mind and should occasion require will call attention of conductors and enginemen to them.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

A.

Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains.

1. * * *

No Three 3 Eng 340 meet Second 2d Four
4 Eng 330 at Hickory.

* * *

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.

* * *

V.

Providing for Movement of Trains on Which More Than One Engine is Used, * * *

When more than one engine is used in a train, train orders will be addressed to enginemen of each engine, and the order will specify the number of each engine, and if at the front end, should have the word "coupled."

* * *

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

Description of Accident

Train order No. 29, addressed to Second 94 at Hingo, 2 miles west of Rockdale, and to engine 927 at Avella, 7.4 miles east of Rockdale, was made complete at 7:10 a. m., and read in part as follows:

Eng 927 run Extra Avella to Smithfield
meet Second 2nd Ninety Four 94 "LE Eng
6018 Eng 917 coupled at Rockdale * * *

Smithfield is 10.1 miles west of Rockdale.

Second 94, an east-bound second-class U. & L. E. freight train, consisted of P. & W. V. engine 917, U. & L. E. engine 6018, 56 cars and a caboose, in the order named. The crew of this train received copies of train order No. 29 at Kingo. Second 94 departed from Kingo, the last open office, at 7:33 a. m., 7 hours 40 minutes late, passed the clearance point of the east siding-switch at Rockdale, where it was required to wait unless Extra 927 West was into clear on the siding, and while moving at an estimated speed of 18 miles per hour it collided with Extra 927 West at a point 1,262 feet east of the east siding-switch.

Extra 927 West, a west-bound P. & W. V. maintenance-of-way service train, consisted of engine 927, one car loaded with a power-shovel, one flat car, one spreader, two dump cars and a caboose, in the order named. The crew of this train received copies of train order No. 29 at Avella. Extra 927 West departed from Avella, the last open office, at 7:30 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with Second 94.

The force of the impact moved the engine of Extra 927 West backward 110 feet, and the engine-truck wheels and all driving wheels became derailed, but the engine remained upright. The front end was badly damaged, the cab was demolished and the engine was otherwise considerably damaged. The first and second cars were derailed and destroyed, and the power-shovel was badly damaged. Both engines of Second 94 were derailed but stopped upright and in line with the track. The front end of each engine, and the cab and the tender of the first engine were badly damaged. The third to tenth cars, inclusive, were derailed and stopped in various positions across the track and on each side of it. Of these cars, four were destroyed.

The fireman and the flagman of the first engine of Second 94, and the engineer, the fireman, the conductor, and the front brakeman of Extra 927 West were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:45 a. m.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of a train order which established Rockdale as the meeting point between Second 94 and Extra 927 West. Under the rules, Second 94 was required to stop clear of the east siding-switch at Rockdale unless Extra 927 West was into clear on the siding. These trains collided at a point 1,262 feet east of the east siding-switch at Rockdale.

As Extra 927 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 25 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. This train was moving on a 3° curve to the left in a cut about 20 feet deep when the fireman saw the approaching train about 500 feet distant, and he immediately called a warning to the engineer, who moved the brake valve to emergency position, then the enginemen and the front brakeman jumped from the engine. They estimated the speed of their train as about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

As Second 94 was approaching Rockdale, the throttles of both engines were in open position, the speed was about 35 miles per hour, and the enginemen of both engines and a brakeman stationed on each engine were maintaining a lookout ahead. The conductor and the flagmen were in the caboosc. Brake-pipe pressure of 90 pounds was being maintained. This train passed the east siding-switch at Rockdale, and the first engine was about 700 feet east of the switch when the engineer of that engine saw Extra 927 West approaching. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of Second 94 was about 18 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The investigation disclosed that Second 94, a W. & L. E. train hauled by W. & L. E. engine 6018 and manned by a W. & L. E. crew, arrived at Mingo, 2 miles west of Rockdale, at 7:28 a. m. Because of heavy tonnage, P. & W. V. engine 917 was coupled ahead of engine 6018 to assist Second 94 eastward. Before their train departed from Mingo all members of the crew, except the fireman of engine 917, read the train order which established Rockdale as the meeting point between their train and Extra 927 West, and they understood that, under the rules, their train was required to stop clear of the east siding-switch at Rockdale unless Extra 927 West was into clear on the siding. The brakes of Second 94 had been tested on the line of the W. & L. E. at Brewster, Ohio, 67.9 miles west of Mingo, and had functioned properly en route. However, after engine 917 was coupled to the train at Mingo, no air-brake test was made to ascertain the effectiveness of the brakes by use of the brake valve of engine 917. The engineer of the second engine placed the double-heading cock in closed position, and Second 94 departed from Mingo at 7:36 a. m. The accident occurred about 7:45 a. m. The members of the crew on the first engine overlooked the provisions of the order until they saw the opposing train approaching. The engineer said that he had filled the lubricator at Mingo and had been engrossed en route in adjusting its feeds. The fireman was an inexperienced employee and he said that he was engaged in tending the fire.

The engineer of the second engine said that when his engine was about 1,000 feet west of the east siding-switch at Rockdale he closed the throttle of his engine and, when he observed that the first engine continued to work steam, he sounded one blast on the whistle to attract the attention of the first engineer. Then he attempted to move the double-heading cock to open position so that he could apply the brakes, but the brakes were applied in emergency before he could accomplish this action. The members of the crew on the first engine said they did not hear the whistle signal. The conductor said that when he observed that the front end of his train had passed the east siding-switch he attempted to open the conductors' valve, but the collision occurred before this was accomplished.

Trains are operated in this territory by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously.

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 tenth day of July, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.