

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3766

READING COMPANY

COATESVILLE, PA

JULY 8, 1957

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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DATE	July 8, 1957	
RAILROAD	Reading	
LOCATION	Coatesville, Pa	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Head-end collision	
TRAINS INVOLVED	Yard locomotive	Freight
TRAIN NUMBER		Extra 445 East
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBERS	Diesel-electric unit 62	Diesel-electric units 445 and 482
CONSIST		23 cars, caboose
SPEEDS	Standing	32 m p h
OPERATION	Timetable special instructions	
TRACK	Single, 5°30' curve to right, 0.50 percent descending grade eastward	
WEATHER	Hazy	
TIME	2 44 a m	
CASUALTIES	1 killed, 3 injured	
CAUSE	Yard locomotive occupying main track without authority, and failure properly to control speed of train moving within yard limits	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3766

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

READING COMPANY

NOVEMBER 14, 1957

Accident near Coatesville, Pa , on July 8, 1957, caused by a yard locomotive occupying the main track without authority, and failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits

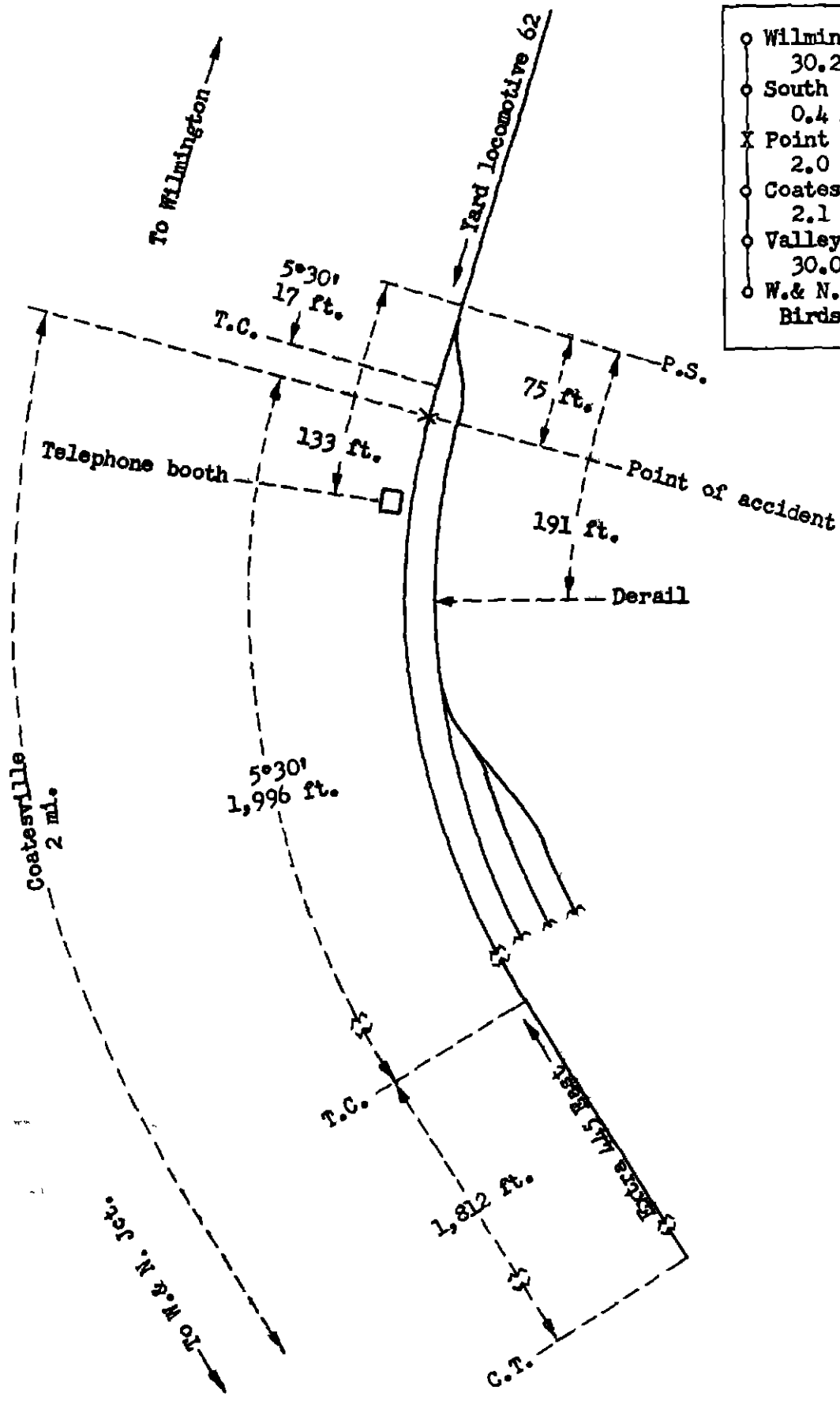
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

TUGGLE, Commissioner

On July 8, 1957, there was a head-end collision between a yard locomotive and a freight train on the line of the Reading Company which resulted in the death of one train-service employee, and the injury of three 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 Tuggle for consideration and disposition

- Wilmington, Del. 30.2 mi.
- South Modena, Pa. 0.4 mi.
- X Point of accident 2.0 mi.
- Coatesville 2.1 mi.
- Valley 30.0 mi.
- W. & N. Jct., Birdsboro, Pa.



Reading Company
 Coatesville, Pa.
 July 8, 1957

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Reading Division extending between W & N Jct , Birdsboro, Pa , and Wilmington, Del , 64.7 miles. In the vicinity of the point of the accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable special instructions. There is no block system in use. East of Coatesville, 3.1 miles east of W & N Jct , a yard consisting of three tracks parallels the main track on the south. The east switch of the lead track of this yard is located 2 miles east of the station. A derail is located on the lead track at a point 191 feet west of the switch. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point 75 feet west of the switch. The yard extends between Valley and South Modena, Pa , 2.1 miles west and 2.4 miles east of Coatesville, respectively. From the west on the main track there are, in succession, a tangent 1,812 feet in length, a 5°30' curve to the right 1,996 feet to the point of the accident and 17 feet eastward. The grade is 0.50 percent descending eastward at the point of the accident.

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

DEFINITIONS

Yard Speed—A speed that will permit stopping within one-half the range of vision.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Coatesville—The movement of Yard engines and all trains, will be directed from the General Yard Master's Office at "CV" Coatesville. Conductors must obtain permission to use main track and will not protect against extra trains or engines. The permission to use main track must be communicated by Conductor, personally, to Engineman, who must acknowledge his understanding. Hand or lamp signals must not be used to convey this information. Conductors shall report when clear of main track.

* * *

On all tracks, engines and trains must not exceed yard speed.

Description of Accident

Diesel-electric unit 62 proceeded eastward from the yard near Coatesville and entered the main track at the east lead-track switch. It then proceeded westward on the main track and stopped at a point 75 feet west of the lead-track switch where it was struck by Extra 445 East.

Extra 445 East, an east-bound freight train, consisted of diesel-electric units 445 and 482, coupled in multiple-unit control, 23 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Valley at 2:30 a. m., passed CV station, Coatesville, the last open office, at 2:41 a. m., and while moving at a speed of 32 miles per hour as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck yard locomotive 62 at a point 75 feet west of the east lead-track switch.

Diesel-electric unit 62 was derailed and stopped upright and parallel to the track with the front end 390 feet east of the point of collision. It was heavily damaged. Diesel-electric units 445 and 482 and the first to the sixth cars, inclusive, of Extra 445 East were derailed. The diesel-electric units stopped parallel to the track and the cars stopped in various positions on or near the track. The diesel-electric units and the first to the fourth cars, inclusive, were heavily damaged and the fifth and the sixth cars were slightly damaged.

The engineer of locomotive 62 was killed. The fireman of locomotive 62, and the engineer and the fireman of Extra 445 East were injured.

The weather was hazy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:44 a. m.

Diesel-electric unit 62 is of the switcher type. Diesel-electric units 445 and 482 are of the road-switcher type.

Discussion

Timetable special instructions require that before using the main track in the vicinity of Coatesville permission must be obtained from the yard master's office at Coatesville. Permission to use the main track must be communicated personally by the conductor to the engineer, who must acknowledge his understanding.

After performing switching operations at the east end of the yard near Coatesville on the day the accident occurred, the crew of locomotive 62 intended to return to Coatesville. Locomotive 62 was headed west. The conductor instructed the engineer to move the locomotive to the derail on the lead track and to wait at that point until permission was obtained by telephone to use the main track. When the locomotive stopped a short distance west of the derail, the conductor proceeded to a telephone booth located 133 feet west of the lead-track switch. One brakeman proceeded to the derail and the other brakeman proceeded to the lead-track switch. While the conductor was engaged telephoning, the brakeman removed the derail from the lead track and locomotive 62 proceeded eastward. The brakeman stationed at the switch observed the locomotive approaching and lined the switch for entry to the main track. After the locomotive entered the main track he restored the switch to normal position. The fireman and the brakeman who was stationed at the switch said they assumed that the engineer had received permission for the movement. The brakeman stationed at the derail said that he removed the derail in preparation for the movement when authorized. Both brakemen said that they did not give the engineer signals to make the movement. Shortly after the locomotive entered the main track, the enginemen observed Extra 445 East approaching. The engineer immediately moved the locomotive westward apparently thinking that the lead-track switch was lined for entry to the lead track. The engineer was attempting to reverse the movement of the locomotive when the collision occurred. The headlight of the locomotive was lighted dimly at that time.

The brakeman who was stationed at the derail said that he observed Extra 445 East approaching shortly after the locomotive entered the main track and that he gave stop signals with his hand light when the train was about 300 feet distant. The conductor said that he observed Extra 445 East approaching when he emerged from the telephone booth. He said he was not aware that locomotive 62 was occupying the main track until after the accident occurred. He said that he was unable to obtain permission to use the main track because authority to use that track between Valley and South Modina had been given to Extra 445 East. He said that he did not indicate to the engineer in any manner that such permission had been given.

As Extra 445 East was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were in their respective positions in the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit, the front brakeman was in the control compartment of the second diesel-electric unit, and the flagman and the conductor were in the caboose. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted brightly. When the train arrived at Valley, the front brakeman obtained permission from the operator at Coatesville for Extra 445 East to occupy the main track. This train proceeded eastward and while moving at a speed of 32 miles per hour the engineer observed stop signals being given in the vicinity of the lead-track switch.

He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes but the speed of the train was not materially reduced before the collision occurred

After the accident occurred, tests were made with a test train having a consist similar to that of Extra 445 East on the day of the accident. It was found that stop signals being given from the point where the brakeman was located when the accident occurred could first be seen from the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit when the train was 715 feet west of the point of accident. The brakes of the test train were applied in emergency while the train was moving at a speed of 31 miles per hour at a point 610 feet west of the point of accident. The train stopped with the front end 172 feet east of the point of accident. A locomotive of the same type as diesel-electric unit 62 placed at the point of accident with the headlight lighted dimly could not be seen from the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit of the test train when the train was located at the point where stop signals could first be seen.

Under the carrier's rules, Extra 445 East was required to be operated within yard limits in the vicinity of Coatesville in such manner that the train could be stopped within one-half the range of vision.

Cause

This accident was caused by a yard locomotive occupying the main track without authority, and failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D C , this fourteenth
day of November, 1957

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,
Secretary