INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2865

THE SPOKANE, PORTLAND & SEATTLE RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR OAKBROOK, OREG., ON

FEBRUARY 1, 1945

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Spokane, Portland & Seattle	
Date:	February 1, 1945	
Location:	Oakbrook, Oreg.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 507 West	: Extra 2030 East
Engine numbers:	507	: 2030
Consist:	84 cars, caboose	: 59 cars, caboose
Estimated speed:	30 m. p. h.	: 10 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; $3^{\circ}15'$ curve; 0.362 percent descending grade westward	
Weather:	Snowing	
Time:	10:50 a. m.	
Casualties:	2 killed; 6 injured	
Cause:	Failure to obey meet order	
Recommendation:	That the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2865

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

THE SPOKANE, PORTLAND & SEATTLE RAILWAY COMPANY

March 17, 1945.

Accident near Oakbrook, Oreg., on February 1, 1945, caused by failure to obey a meet order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 1, 1945, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway near Oakbrook, Oreg., which resulted in the death of two employees, and the injury of six employees.

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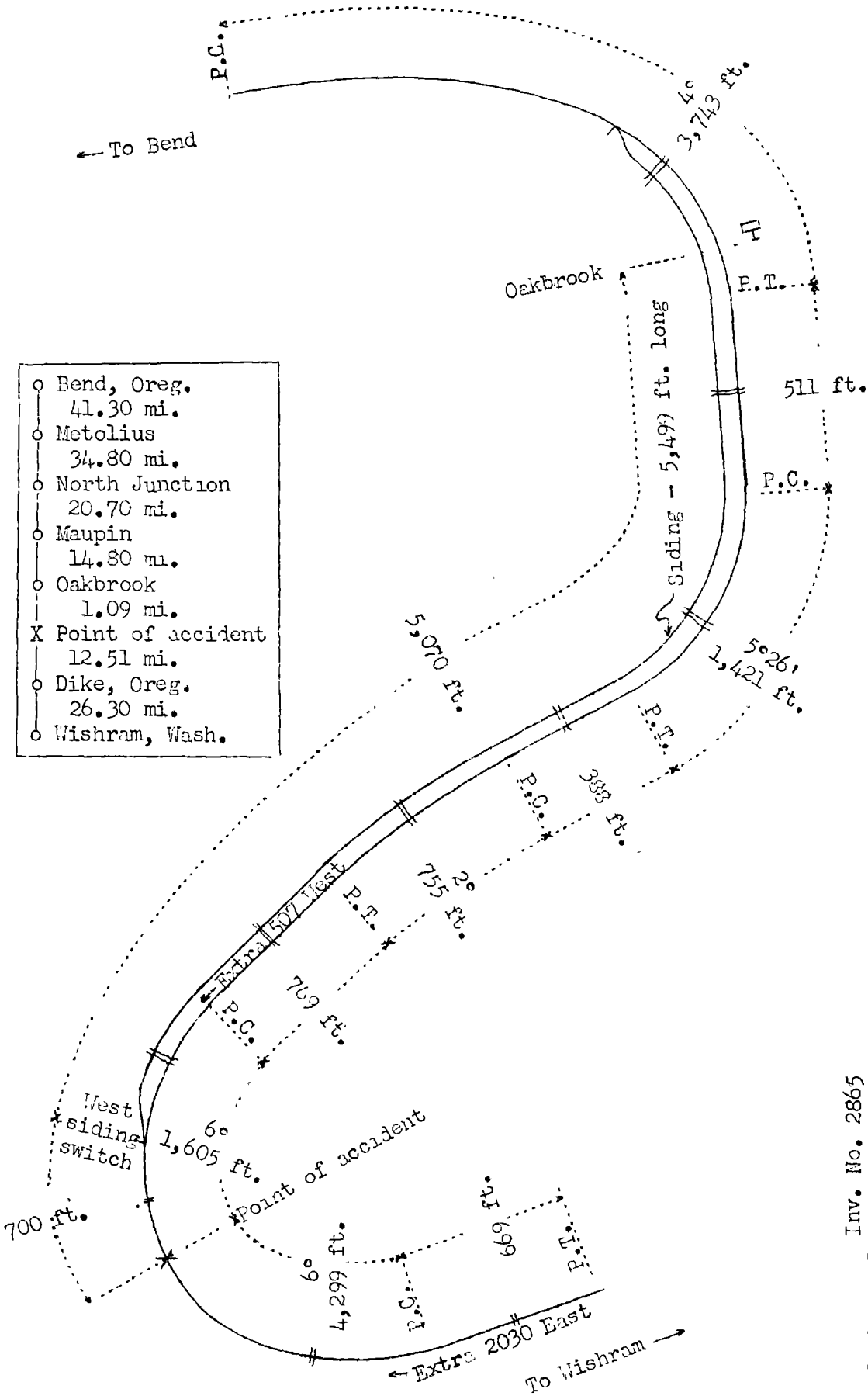
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 2865
Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway
Oakbrook, Oreg.
February 1, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway designated as the Oregon Trunk Railway and extending eastward from Wishram, Wash., to Bend, Oreg., 151.5 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. At Oakbrook, 39.9 miles east of Wishram, a siding 5,499 feet in length paralleled the main track on the north. The west switch of this siding was 5,070 feet west of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 700 feet west of the west siding-switch. From the east there were in succession, a compound curve to the right 3,743 feet in length, the maximum curvature of which was 4°, a tangent 511 feet, a 5°26' curve to the right 1,421 feet, a tangent 388 feet, a 2° curve to the left 755 feet, a tangent 769 feet and a compound curve to the left, the maximum curvature of which was 6°, extending 1,605 feet to the point of accident and 4,299 feet westward. From the west there was a tangent 669 feet in length, which was followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade was 0.362 percent descending westward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

> S-88. At meeting points between extra trains, the train in the inferior time-table direction must take the siding unless otherwise provided.
>
> S-89 (A). * * *
>
> At train order meeting points, the train holding the main track must stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on siding unless the train to be met is clear of the main track and switch is properly lined.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 30 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At North Junction, 35.5 miles east of Oakbrook, the crew of Extra 507 West, a west-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 517, reading in part as follows:

> Engine * * * 2030 run extra
> Wishram to Bend take siding
> meet Extra 507 West * * *
> at Oakbrook

Extra 507 West, consisting of engine 507, 84 cars and a caboose, passed Maupin, 14.8 miles east of Oakbrook and the last open office, at 10:23 a. m., passed the clearance point of the west siding-switch at Oakbrook, where it was required to wait unless Extra 2030 East was into clear on the siding, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with Extra 2030 East 700 feet west of the west siding-switch.

At Wishram the crew of Extra 2030 East, an east-bound freight train, received copies of train order No. 517. This train, consisting of engine 2030, 59 cars and a caboose, departed from Dike, 13.6 miles west of Oakbrook and the last open office, at 10:23 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it collided with Extra 507 West.

The engine of each train, 21 cars of Extra 507 and 4 cars of Extra 2030 were derailed and damaged.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 10.03 trains.

It was snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:50 a. m.

The engineer and the front brakeman of Extra 507 were killed. The engineer, the fireman, the front brakeman, the flagman and the conductor of Extra 2030, and the fireman of Extra 507 were injured.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 517, which established Oakbrook as the meeting point between Extra 507 West and Extra 2030 East and included the instruction for Extra 2030 East to take siding at the meeting point. Under the rules, Extra 507 West was required to stop clear of the west siding-switch at Oakbrook unless Extra 2030 East was into clear on the siding. The surviving employees concerned so understood.

As Extra 2030 East was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of embankments adjacent to the track on the curve, the view of the track ahead was materially restricted. The first the employees on the engine knew of anything being wrong was when the engineer saw the engine of the approaching train about 300 feet distant. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the collision occurred before the brakes became effective.

As Extra 507 West was approaching Oakbrook the front brakeman and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The brakes had been tested and had functioned properly en route. The fireman said that when the engine was about 1 mile east of the west siding-switch he and the front brakeman called a warning to the engineer. The engineer acknowledged the warning by raising his hand, but no action was taken by the employees on the engine to stop the train clear of the west siding-switch. When the engine was in the vicinity of the west siding-switch the fireman saw the engine of the approaching train about 300 feet distant. He again warned the engineer, then jumped off just before the collision occurred. At that time the brakes had not been applied. After the accident, a copy of train order

No. 517 was found attached to a clipboard in the cab of engine 507. The order had been in the possession of the crew of Extra 507 about 1 hour prior to the accident. The conductor, the swing brakeman and the flagman were in the caboose. They said that, because of track curvature and embankments in this vicinity, it was difficult for the members of a crew on the rear end of a long freight train to determine when an opposing train was into clear on the siding until the engine of a train moving on the main track was in the vicinity of the west siding-switch. When the conductor of Extra 507 became aware that the opposing train was not on the siding he opened the conductor's air valve, but this action was not taken soon enough to avert the accident.

On January 18, 1942, a rear-end collision between two freight trains occurred on this line at Metolius, Oreg., 70.3 miles east of Oakbrook. This accident resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of three employees. The Commission's report covering the investigation contains the statement that if an adequate block system had been in use on the line in question the accident would not have occurred, and it was recommended that the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line involved. Although the book of operating rules of this carrier contains manual-block rules which provide for blocking both opposing and following movements, these rules were not in effect in this territory. If an adequate block system had been in use, these opposing trains would not have been permitted to occupy the same block simultaneously, and this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

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

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred. A rule to show cause why it should not do so will be served on said carrier.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of March, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.

(SEAL)