

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3109
ST. LOUIS-SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT SOONER, OKLA., ON
JUNE 12, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad: St. Louis-San Francisco
Date: June 12, 1947
Location: Sooner, Okla.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: 437 : Extra 1613 East
Engine numbers: 1288 : 1613
Consists: Auxiliary water : 34 cars, caboose
car, 41 cars,
caboose
Estimated speeds: 10 m. p. h. : 10 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 0.49 percent
descending grade westward
Weather: Clear
Time: 11:47 p. m.
Casualties: 3 injured
Cause: Inferior train occupying main track
on time of opposing superior train
Recommendation: That the St. Louis-San Francisco
Railway Company install an adequate
block system on the line on which
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3109

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

ST. LOUIS-SAN FRANCISCO RAILWAY COMPANY

July 18, 1947

Accident at Sooner, Okla., on June 12, 1947, caused by
an inferior train occupying the main track on
the time of an opposing superior train.

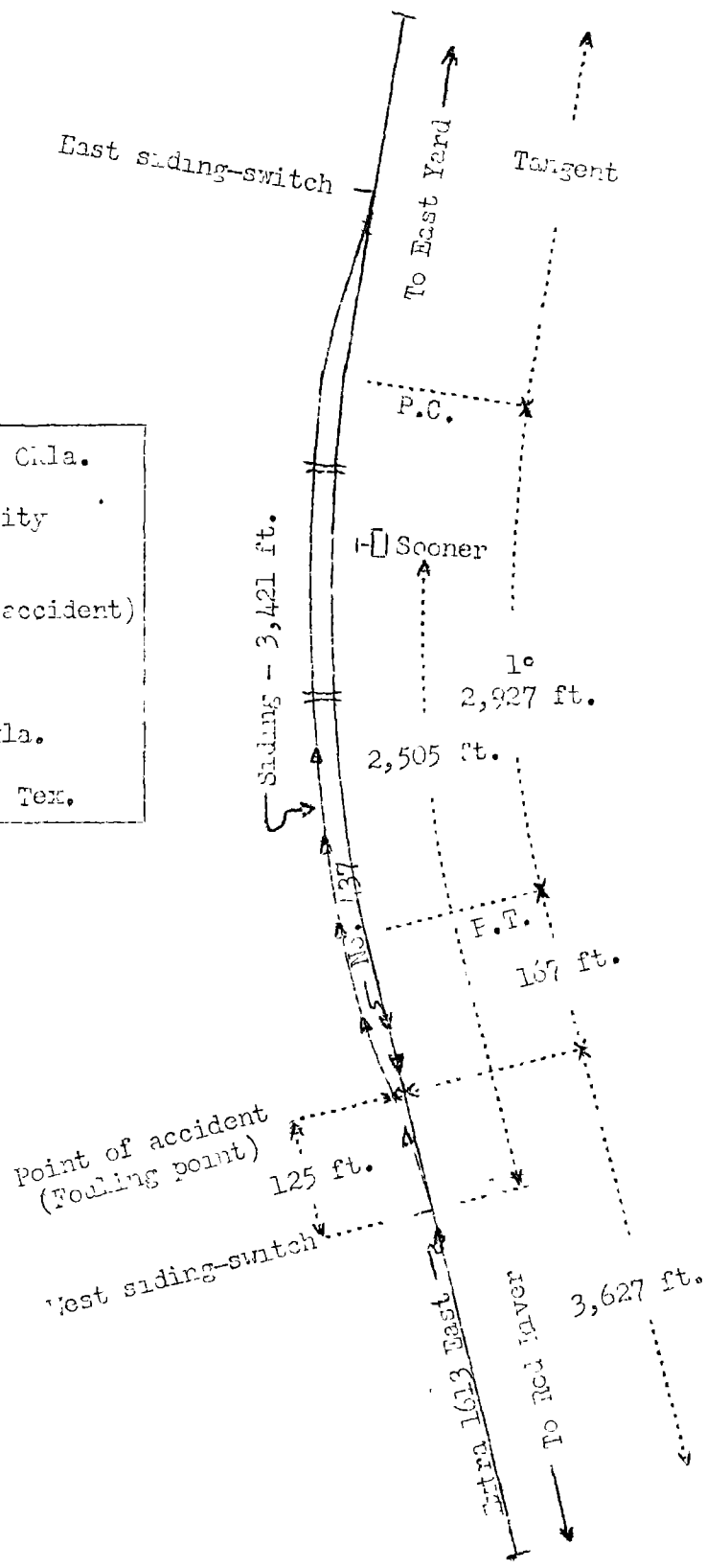
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 12, 1947, there was a side collision between
two freight trains on the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway
at Sooner, Okla., which resulted in the injury of three
employees.

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

- o East Yard, Okla. 1.0 mi.
- o Oklahoma City 27.0 mi.
- X Sooner (Point of accident) 13.3 mi.
- o Chickasha 19.7 mi.
- o Cement, Okla. 116.7 mi.
- o Red River, Tex.



Inv. No. 3109
 St. Louis-San Francisco Railway
 Sooner, Okla.
 June 16, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the South-western Division extending between East Yard, Oklahoma City, Okla., and Red River, Tex., 176.7 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Sooner, 28 miles west of East Yard, a siding 3,421 feet in length parallels the main track on the north. The west switch of this siding is 2,805 feet west of the station-sign. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the west siding-switch, at a point 125 feet east of the switch. From the east there is a 1° curve to the left 2,927 feet in length, and then a tangent 167 feet to the point of accident and 3,627 feet westward. The grade is 0.49 percent descending westward.

Operating rules read in part as follows.

5. * * *

The time applies at the switch where an opposing train enters the siding; * * *

* * *

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by night. It must be extinguished when a train turns out to meet another train and has stopped clear of the main track, * * *

* * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

Night signals

A white light,
A red light,
Torpedoes
and fuses.

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

S-87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than five minutes * * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes on the rail on the engineman's side, 80 feet apart, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusee.

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by trainman or fireman.

* * *

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

* * *

S-E.

Time Orders.

* * *

(4) No 1 run 1 hour late A to G.

* * *

This makes the schedule time of the train named, between the stations mentioned, as much later as stated in the order, and any other train receiving the order is required to run with respect to this later time as before required to run with respect to the regular schedule time.

* * *

In this territory the maximum authorized speeds are 45 miles per hour for passenger trains and 35 miles per hour for freight trains.

Description of Accident

Train order No. 643, addressed to No. 437 at East Yard and to Extra 1613 East at Chickasha, 13.3 miles west of Sooner, was made complete at 10:16 p. m., and read as follows:

No. 437 Eng 1288 Run 2 Hours and 30 Mins Late East
Yard to Cement

Cement is 32 miles west of Sooner.

No. 437, a west-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 1288, one auxiliary water car, 41 cars and a caboose. The crew of this train received copies of train order No. 643 at East Yard. No. 437 departed from East Yard, the last open office, at 10:30 p. m., 2 hours 30 minutes late, passed the station-sign at Sooner about 11:46 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour it struck the twenty-ninth car of Extra 1613 East at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the west siding-switch at Sooner.

Extra 1613 East, an east-bound freight train, consisted of engine 1613, 34 loaded tank cars and a caboose. The crew of this train received copies of train order No. 643 at Chickasha. Extra 1613 East departed from Chickasha, the last open office, at 11:15 p. m., and while it was entering the siding at Sooner and moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour the twenty-ninth car was struck by No. 437.

The twenty-ninth to thirty-second cars, inclusive, of Extra 1613 East were overturned to the north and were badly damaged. The engine of No. 437 stopped across the main track and at an angle of 45 degrees to it and leaned to the south at an angle of 45 degrees, with the front end 145 feet west of the point of accident. The auxiliary water car and the front truck of the first car were derailed. The front end of the engine was badly damaged.

The engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of No. 437 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:47 p. m.

Discussion

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 643, which required No. 437, a west-bound second-class train, to run 2 hours 30 minutes late on its schedule from East Yard to Cement. Extra 1613 East was inferior to No. 437 and, under the rules, was required to be into clear on the siding at Sooner not later than 11:40 p. m., if it proceeded to that station to meet No. 437, or to provide flag protection. About 11:47 p. m., while Extra 1613 East was entering the siding at Sooner at the west switch, the twenty-ninth car of this train was struck by No. 437 at the fouling point of the main track and the west switch.

As No. 437 was approaching Sooner and moving on a 1° curve to the left, the headlight was lighted brightly, the speed was about 35 miles per hour and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The front brakeman was in the brakeman's booth on the tender, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. Brake-pipe pressure of 80 pounds was being maintained. The first that any of these employees knew of anything being wrong was when the fireman saw a lighted red fusee being displayed from a point about 2,000 feet east of the west siding-switch. He immediately warned the engineer, who made a service brake-pipe reduction, then moved the brake valve to emergency position. No. 437 was moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The brakes of No. 437 had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Extra 1613 East departed from Chickasha, 13.3 miles west of Sooner, at 11:15 p. m. There is no siding between Chickasha and Sooner. The crew of this train understood that if their train proceeded to Sooner for No. 437 it was required to enter the siding at the west switch and to be clear of the main track not later than 11:40 p. m., and that, if their train was not clear of the main track at the required time, flag protection was required to be furnished a sufficient distance east of the west siding-switch for No. 437 to be stopped short of the clearance point. All members of the crew, except the fireman, said that, before their train departed from Chickasha, they were confident that sufficient time remained for their train to proceed to Sooner and to be into clear not later than 11:40 p. m. The fireman said that he informed the engineer that the time interval was not sufficient. Extra 1613 East stopped in the vicinity of the west siding-switch at Sooner about 11:42 p. m. The front brakeman lined the switch for entry to the siding, moved the derail to non-derailing position, then boarded the pilot step on the right

side of the engine. As Extra 1613 East was entering the siding he saw No. 437 approaching in the vicinity of the east siding-switch, about 3,400 feet distant, and gave stop signals with a lighted red fusee. No. 437 passed his engine at a speed of about 25 miles per hour at a point about 2,000 feet east of the west switch. The engineer of Extra 1613 East said that after the brakeman started to give stop signals to No. 437 he placed the headlight switch in position for dimmed illumination. The fireman of No. 437 said that the headlight on the engine of Extra 1613 East was not lighted at any time after his train had reached a point where he could have seen the headlight of an opposing train, and the first indication he had of the opposing train was when he saw the lighted fusee at a distance of about 2,000 feet. The engineer of No. 437 said that when his engine reached a point where he could see the engine of Extra 1613 East the headlight of that train was not lighted. The conductor and the flagman of Extra 1613 East were in the caboose and when they became aware that their train would not be into clear on the siding at the required time and that No. 437 was approaching, the conductor displayed a lighted fusee from the right window of the cupola. The engineer of Extra 1613 East said that he did not arrange to provide flag protection against No. 437 prior to 11:40 p. m., as he thought his train would be into clear on the siding not later than 11:45 p. m.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, No. 437 would have received definite information that the main track was occupied.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighteenth day of July, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.