

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3453  
WESTERN MARYLAND RAILWAY COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT MONTROSE, W. VA., ON  
FEBRUARY 28, 1952

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SUMMARY

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Date: February 28, 1952

Railroad: Western Maryland

Location: Montrose, W. Va.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Equipment involved: Track motor-car No. : Freight train  
7

Train number: Extra MC 7 East : Extra 817 East

Engine number: : 817

Consist: : 9 cars, caboose

Speeds: Standing : 25 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.36 percent  
ascending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:56 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Failure to provide rear-end protection  
for movement of track motor-car

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3453

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

WESTERN MARYLAND RAILWAY COMPANY

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April 7, 1952

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Accident at Montrose, W. Va., on February 28, 1952, caused  
by failure to provide rear-end protection for the  
movement of a track motor-car.

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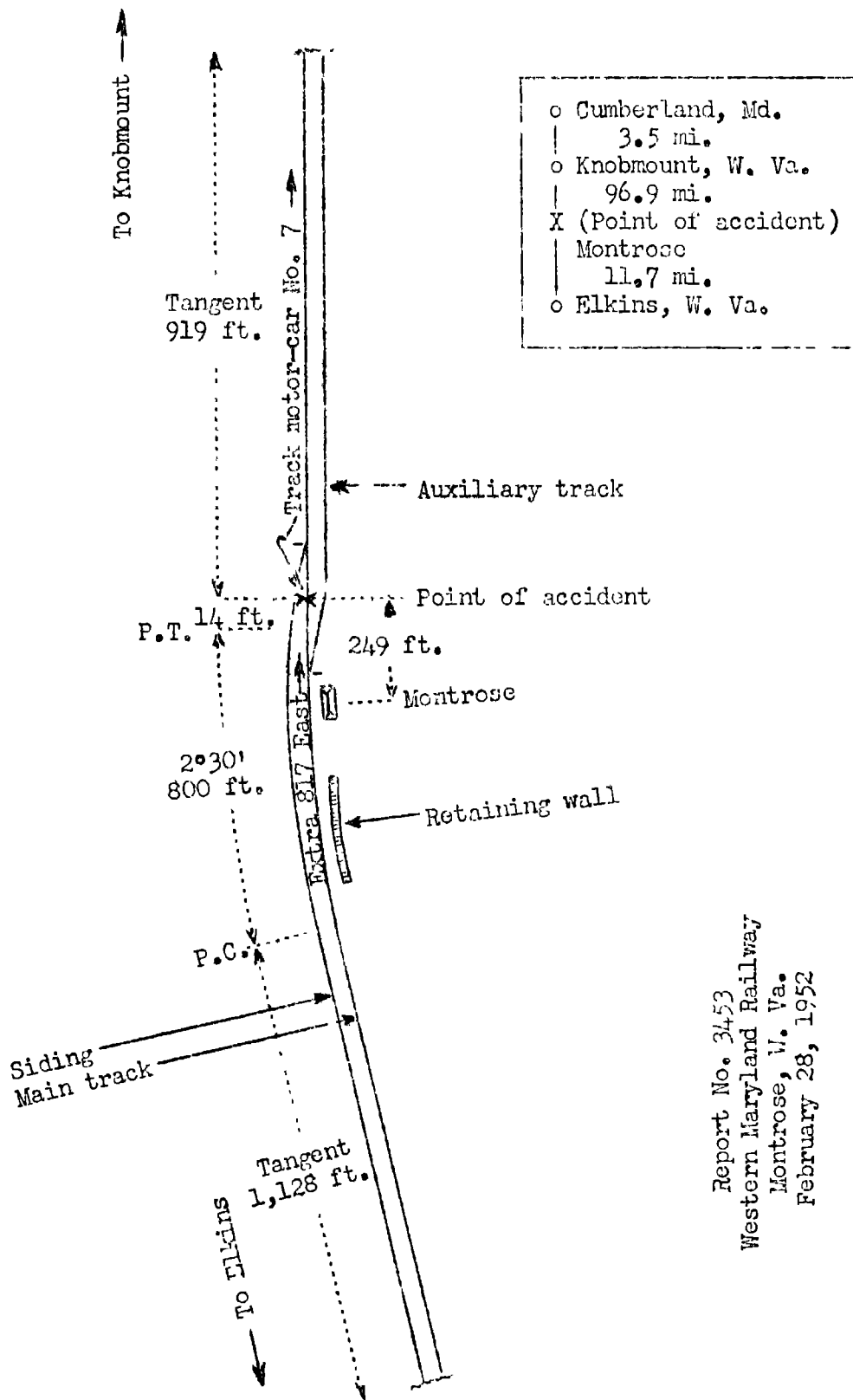
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 28, 1952, there was a rear-end collision  
between a track motor-car and a freight train on the Western  
Maryland Railway at Montrose, W. Va., which resulted in the  
death of one maintenance-of-way employee, and the injury of  
one maintenance-of-way employee.

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<sup>1</sup>  
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.



Report No. 3453  
Western Maryland Railway  
Montrose, W. Va.  
February 28, 1952

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Elkins Division extending between Elkins and Knobmount, W. Va., 108.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 11.7 miles east of Elkins and 249 feet east of the station at Montroce. From the west there are, in succession, a tangent 1,128 feet in length, a 2°30' curve to the right 800 feet, and a tangent 14 feet to the point of accident and 919 feet eastward. The grade is 0.36 percent ascending eastward at the point of accident.

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  
Fuseses.

\* \* \*

91. Unless some form of block system is used, trains in the same direction must keep not less than 5 minutes apart, except in closing up at stations. \* \* \*

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 \* \* \*

\* \* \*

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. By night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fuseses must be thrown off at proper intervals.

\* \* \*

705. Train dispatchers must not issue train orders for the movement of a motor car unless the motor car operator, or an employe acting as pilot, has passed required examination on Book of Rules and Special Instructions.

706. When motor cars are making movements authorized by Train Orders, rules of the Book of Rules and Special Instructions of Division Time Tables govern.

719. Motor car operators must be qualified to comply with the rules governing the movement of motor cars and must also know the physical characteristics of that portion of the railroad over which the motor car is to be operated, otherwise an employe who is qualified must act as pilot.

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

#### Description of Accident

At Elkins a bridge and building supervisor, who was acting as pilot of track motor-car No. 7, and a track motor-car operator received, among others, copies of train order No. 203 reading as follows:

Motor Car 7 run extra Elkins to Knobmount

Track motor-car No. 7, occupied by a division engineer, a track supervisor, the bridge and building supervisor, and the track motor-car operator, departed east-bound from Elkins about 7:28 a. m. About 7:56 a. m. the track motor-car was stopped on the main track at a point 249 feet east of the station at Montrese. About 30 seconds later it was struck by Extra 817 East.

Extra 817 East, an east-bound freight train, consisted of engine 817, nine cars and a caboose. This train departed from Elkins about 7:33 a. m. and while moving at a speed of about 25 miles per hour it struck track motor-car No. 7

The track motor-car was not derailed, but was moved eastward a distance of 357 feet, to the point where the engine of Extra 817 East stopped. It was badly damaged. The front end of the engine of Extra 817 East was slightly damaged.

The bridge and building supervisor was killed, and the track supervisor was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:56 a. m.

Track motor-car No. 7 was a 1937 model seven-passenger four-door Lincoln sedan equipped with 33-inch flanged steel wheels for operation on standard gage track. It was equipped with electric marker and classification lights. It weighed approximately 5,700 pounds.

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 trains.

#### Discussion

On the line of this carrier movements of automobile-type track motor-cars, which cannot be removed from the track readily, are authorized by train orders. When a movement is so authorized, the rules and special instructions pertaining to the movement of trains also apply to the movement of the track motor-car. If the movement of a track motor-car is authorized by train order and the motor-car operator has not passed an examination on the operating rules, an employee who is qualified must accompany the car and act as pilot. With the exception of the track motor-car operator, each of the occupants of track motor-car No. 7 was qualified on the operating rules. At the time of the accident the bridge and building supervisor was assigned to act as pilot.

Track motor-car No. 7 was being used in inspection work. It was intended that the track motor-car would follow No. 10, an east-bound passenger train, from Elkins to Cumberland, Md., 3.5 miles east of Knobmount. The bridge and building supervisor obtained train orders authorizing the movement from Elkins to Knobmount. Before No. 10 departed from Elkins, the track supervisor ascertained from the conductor of Extra 817 East that that train would be ready to follow No. 10. He arranged with the conductor to permit the track motor-car to precede Extra 817 East from Elkins, and after he boarded the track motor-car he informed the other occupants of this arrangement. The conductor said the track supervisor told him that the track motor-car would make no stops on route, and said he gave this information to the other members of his crew. No. 10 departed from Elkins at 7:25 a. m., on time.

The track motor-car followed No. 10 from the passenger station, and 3 minutes later Extra 817 East entered the main track a short distance east of the passenger station and followed the track motor-car from that point. The track motor-car maintained a speed of about 25 miles per hour between Elkins and Montrose. There was no train-order office between those stations. It was stopped at a point 243 feet east of the station at Montrose to permit the occupants to inspect a drain which was being installed near the track. About 30 seconds later, and as the car was about to proceed, it was struck by Extra 817 East. The surviving occupants said that there had been no conversation regarding the following train after they left Elkins, and that no protection against following trains was provided either before or after the car stopped.

As Extra 817 East was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 22 miles per hour. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their positions on the engine, and the members of the train crew were in the caboose. Because of curvature of the track and a retaining wall and a station building located south of the track, the point at which the track motor-car stopped is not visible from an engine approaching from the west at distances greater than 600 feet. When the engineer observed the track motor-car ahead he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, closed the throttle, and opened the sander valve. He thought the speed was about 25 miles per hour when the collision occurred. According to the tape of the speed recording device, the maximum speed attained by Extra 817 East between Elkins and Montrose was 30 miles per hour.

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the rules require that the flagman take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. 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. If the movement of a track motor-car is authorized by train order, the rules require that the same protection be provided for the track motor-car as would be provided for a train. In the instant case no protection against following trains was provided by the occupants of track motor-car No. 7,



Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide rear-end protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of April, 1952.

By the Commission, Commissioner Fatterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.