

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3046
THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT ORCVILLE YARD, CALIF., ON
DECEMBER 14, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Western Pacific
Date: December 14, 1946
Location: Oroville Yard, Calif.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Equipment involved: Engine and cars : Passenger train
Train number: : 39
Engine numbers: Diesel-electric 556 : 172
Consists: 38 cars : 15 cars
Estimated speeds: Standing : 20 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders; yard limits
Track: Single; 1°40' curve; 0.17 percent ascending grade westward
Weather: Clear
Time: 2:22 a. m.
Casualties: 15 injured
Cause: Engine fouling main track immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3046

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

THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

January 27, 1947

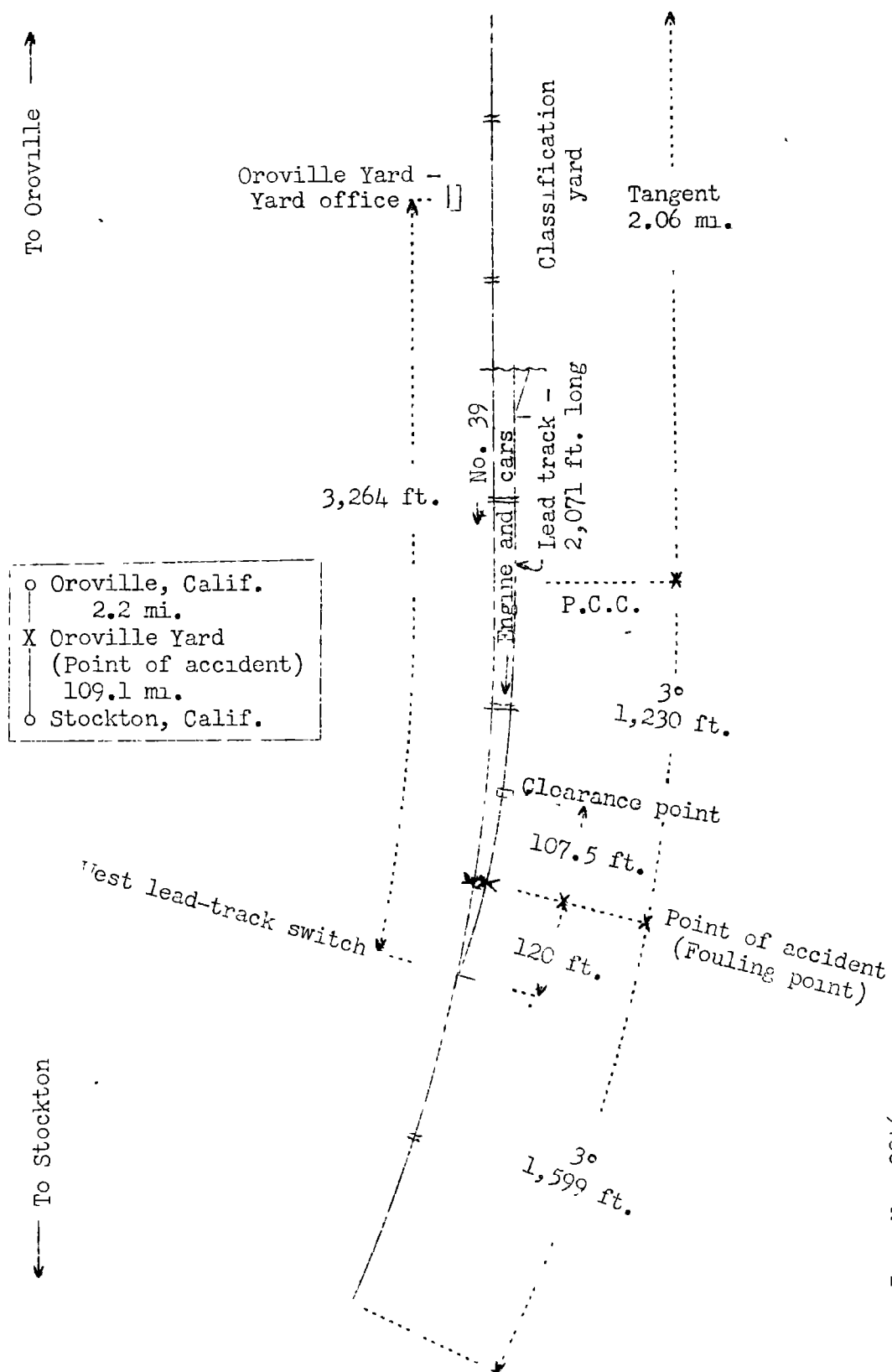
Accident at Oroville Yard, Calif., on December 14, 1946,
caused by an engine fouling the main track immediately
in front of an approaching train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On December 14, 1946, there was a side collision between an engine and a passenger train on the Western Pacific Railroad at Oroville Yard, Calif., which resulted in the injury of 11 passengers, 1 Pullman employee and 3 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Railroad Commission of California.

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.



o Oroville, Calif.
 2.2 mi.
 X Oroville Yard
 (Point of accident)
 109.1 mi.
 o Stockton, Calif.

Inv. No. 3046
 Western Pacific Railroad
 Oroville Yard, Calif.
 December 14, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Western Division extending between Oroville and Stockton, Calif., 111.3 miles, a single-track line. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. Within yard limits at Oroville Yard, 2.2 miles west of Oroville, a lead track 2,071 feet long, which connects the west ends of the tracks of a classification yard and the main track, parallels the main track on the south. The west switch of the lead track is provided with a No. 10 turnout, and is 3,264 feet west of the yard office. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the main track and the turnout of the west lead-track switch, at a point 107.5 feet west of the clearance point and 120 feet east of the west switch. From the east on the main track there is a tangent 2.06 miles in length, which is followed by a compound curve to the right, the maximum curvature of which is 3°, 1,230 feet to the point of accident and 1,599 feet westward. At the point of accident the curvature is 1°40'. The grade is 0.17 percent ascending westward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

With Caution--Restricted Speed--To run at reduced speed, according to conditions, prepared to stop short of a train, engine, car, misplaced switch, derail, or other obstruction, * * *

* * *

5. * * *

The time applies to the switch where an inferior train enters the siding; where there is no siding it applies to the place from which train order signal is operated; * * *

* * *

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first-class trains.

Second- and inferior class trains, extra trains and engines must approach and move with caution within yard limits.

* * *

A train-order signal is provided at the yard office at Oroville Yard.

Description of Accident

Engine 556, a Diesel-electric yard engine, headed east and pulling 38 cars westward on the lead track, stopped about 2:21 a. m., with the engine fouling the main track on the turnout of the west lead-track switch. Immediately afterward engine 556 was struck by No. 39.

No. 39, a west-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 172, one baggage car, three sleeping cars; three coaches, four sleeping cars, one dining car and three sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. This train departed from Oroville at 2:15 a. m., on time, passed the yard office at Oroville Yard, the last open office, at 2:20 a. m., on time, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with engine 556.

Engine 556 was derailed to the left, but remained practically upright and in line with the track. The left side of the engine was considerably damaged. The first car of the cut of cars being pulled by engine 556 was derailed. The engine and the first four cars of No. 39 were derailed. The engine stopped on its right side, north of the track and at an angle of about 45 degrees to it, with the front end 189 feet west of the point of accident. The engine was badly damaged. The tender became separated from the engine and the first car, and stopped upright at the rear of the engine and at right angles to the track. The first and second cars stopped upright, immediately east of the tender and practically at right angles to the track. The third and fourth cars stopped upright, immediately east of the second car and in line with the track. The first three cars were considerably damaged, and the fourth car was slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:22 a. m.

The engineer, the fireman and the baggageman of No. 39 were injured.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provide that within yard limits the main track may be used, but protection against first-class trains must be furnished. The employees concerned in this investigation so understood.

No. 39, a west-bound first-class train, was due to leave the yard office at Oroville Yard, the last station where time is shown, 0.62 mile east of the point of accident, at 2:20 a. m. No. 39 passed the yard office at Oroville at 2:20 a. m., on time. About 2:21 a. m. yard engine 556, headed eastward but moving westward and pulling a cut of 38 cars from one of the yard tracks to the lead track to switch these cars to other yard tracks, stopped on the turnout of the west lead-track switch. Immediately afterward engine 556 was struck by No. 39.

As No. 39 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 25 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly, and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. When the engine was about 500 feet east of the west lead-track switch the engineer saw a lighted red fusee in the vicinity of the switch and engine 556 fouling the main track on the turnout of the switch. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the train could not be stopped before the collision occurred. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

When the collision occurred the engineer of engine 556 was on the engine, and the engine foreman and the two switchmen were in the vicinity of the east end of the cut of cars being pulled by the engine. Immediately before the accident occurred the fireman displayed a lighted red fusee and jumped from the engine. The engine foreman and the switchmen were not aware that their engine had fouled the main track until after the collision occurred. The engineer said that it was not his intention to use or to foul the main track during the movement involved. The air-brakes of the cars were not coupled to the engine, and the engineer was using only the brake system of the engine to control the movement. When the engine was in the vicinity of the clearance point of the turnout of the west lead-track switch the fireman warned the engineer, then the engineer moved the independent brake valve to application position. However, this action was not taken soon enough to control the movement, and the engineer moved the automatic brake valve to emergency position. The engine and cars had just been stopped, with the engine fouling the main track, when the collision occurred. Engine 556 is equipped with type EL-14 brake equipment, and at the time the accident occurred the regulating devices were adjusted to maintain brake-pipe pressure of 80 pounds and main-reservoir pressure of 130 pounds. Prior to the accident the brakes of the engine had been tested and had functioned properly.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an engine fouling the main track immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of January, 1947.

(SEAL)

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.
W. P. BARTEL, Secretary.