

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
WHEELING & LAKE ERIE RAILWAY

JEWETT, OHIO

July 16, 1937

INVESTIGATION No. 2187

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SUMMARY

Inv-2187

Railroad: Wheeling & Lake Erie
Date: July 16, 1937
Location: Jewett, Ohio
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Third No. 95 : Second No. 92
Engine numbers: P. & W. V. 1000 : W. & L. E. 6016
Consist: 45 cars and : 24 cars and
caboose : caboose
Speed: 15 to 30 m.p.h. : Standing
Track: 3° curve to the left for westward
trains; grade 0.7 percent descending.
Weather: Clear
Time: 8:05 a.m.
Casualties: 2 injured
Cause: Failure of Train Third No. 95 to obey
meet order due to engineman misreading
order. Failure to operate Train Third
No. 95 under control within yard limits.

August 20, 1937.

To the Commission:

On July 16, 1937, there was a head-end collision between a Pittsburgh & West Virginia Railway freight train and a Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway freight train on the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway, at Jewett, Ohio, which resulted in the injury of two employees.

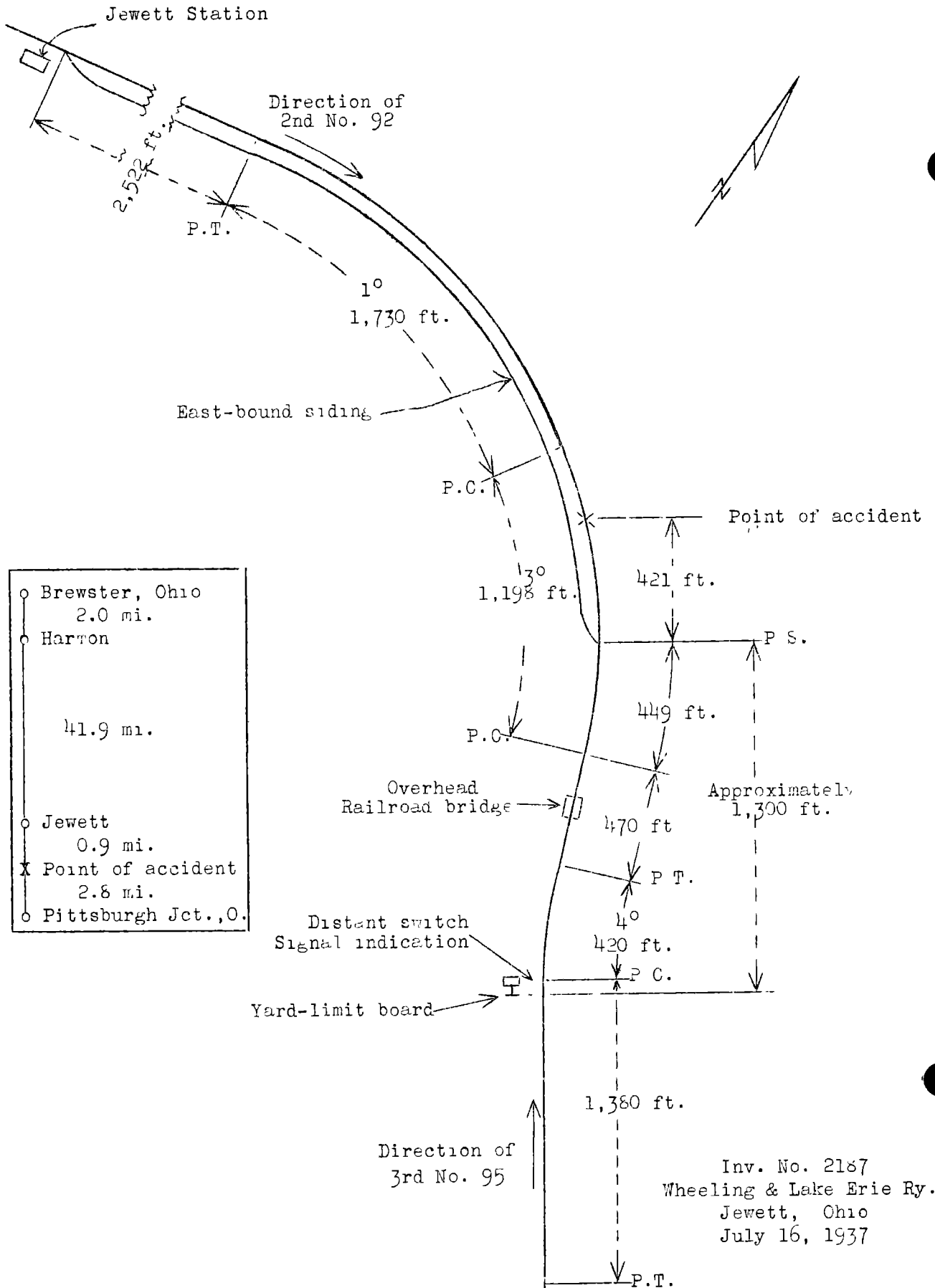
Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Second District of the Toledo Division extending between Pittsburgh Junction and Brewster, Ohio, a distance of 47.6 miles; this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders, no block-signal system being in use.

Trains of the P. & W. V., manned by its own employees, are operated over the W. & L. E. Ry., between Pittsburgh Junction and Brewster, subject to the rules of the latter-named company.

The westward siding at Jewett is located west of the passenger station and parallels the main track on the north, while the eastward siding, which parallels the main track on the south, lies east of the station, its east switch being approximately 4,900 feet from the station; both sidings are within yard limits, the east yard limit board being approximately 1,300 feet east of the east passing-track switch. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 421 feet west of the east switch of the eastward siding. Approaching this point from the east there is a tangent 1,380 feet long, followed by a 4° curve to the right 420 feet in length, 470 feet of tangent and a 3° curve to the left 1,098 feet long upon which the accident occurred at a point approximately 870 feet from its eastern end. The gradient varies from 0.34 percent to 1.1 percent descending for west-bound trains, being 0.7 percent at the point of accident. The view from the left side of a west-bound train is restricted to a distance of about 1,050 feet due to an overhead bridge located approximately 600 feet east of the east switch of the eastward siding, and shrubbery on the south side of the curve, while the view from the other side is restricted to only a few feet because of track curvature.

Special instructions in the timetable provide that:



o	Brewster, Ohio	2.0 mi.
o	Harron	
		41.9 mi.
o	Jewett	0.9 mi.
X	Point of accident	2.8 mi.
o	Pittsburgh Jct., O.	

Inv. No. 2187
 Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry.
 Jewett, Ohio
 July 16, 1937

(Rule 6) All second, third, fourth-class and extra trains and engines must move within yard limits under control, prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

(Rule 112) All west-bound trains will approach distant switch-signal indication located 1,200 feet east of the east switch of east-bound siding, Jewett, prepared to stop and may proceed from that point to Jewett station under full control.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8:05 a.m.

Description

Train Second No. 92, an east-bound second-class W. & L.E. freight train, consisted of 24 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 6016, and was in charge of Conductor Reynolds and Engineman Taylor. This train departed from Brewster, 43.9 miles west of Jewett, at 6:05 a.m., according to the train sheet and at Harmon, 2 miles east of Brewster, received train order 43, form 19, which read as follows:

"No. ninety four 94 and second 2nd ninety two 92 will meet first 1st ninety five 95 at Dewey, have right over second 2nd ninety five 95 Lonas to Sherrodsville and over third 3rd ninety five 95 to Pgh. Jct. 1st 95 take siding at Dewey. 2nd 95 take siding at Sherrodsville. Second 2nd ninety two 92 will pass No. ninety four 94 at Bolivar. No. 94 take siding at Crossover Bolivar."

This train arrived at the west end of Jewett yard at 7:49 a.m. and departed at 7:54 a.m., according to the train sheet, having received order No. 53, reading as follows:

"Third 3rd ninety five 95 will meet second 2nd ninety two 92 at Jewett. 3rd 95 take siding on east-bound siding"

It moved slowly up the main track and stopped to clear the east end of the east-bound siding at Jewett where it was almost immediately struck by Train Third No. 95.

Train Third No. 95, a west-bound second-class P. & W. V. freight train, consisted of 45 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1000, and was in charge of Conductor Craven and Engineman Donnelly. This train left Rook, Pa., on the P. & W.V. Ry., about

5:00 a.m., and without stopping entered the main track of the W. & L.E. at Pittsburgh Junction, 2.8 miles east of the east switch of the east-bound siding at Jewett, at 7:57 a.m. At the telegraph office which is located south of the main track at the junction switch, 1 message, 6 form 19 train orders, including 43 and 53, previously quoted, and a clearance card were handed up by the operator. The train proceeded westward, passed the east switch of the eastward siding at Jewett and collided with Train Second No. 92 at a point about 421 feet west of the switch while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 15 and 30 miles per hour.

All wheels of both engines and tenders remained on the rails with the exception of the forward wheels of engine 1000, which were raised from the rails; the front ends of both engines were considerably damaged. The first car in Train Second No. 92 was derailed but remained on the road bed behind the tender; the first and second cars in Train Third No. 95 stopped on their sides to the right of the track, while the third car stopped on its side on the siding and alongside the tender of engine 1000; the fourth car stopped upright and across the track. All cars derailed were considerably damaged, but there was only slight damage to the track. The employees injured were the engineman and head brakeman of Train Third No. 95.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Donnelly, of Train Third No. 95, stated that an air brake test was made at Rook and the brakes operated satisfactorily en route. The train was moving at a speed of 4 or 5 miles an hour approaching Pittsburgh Junction where a train order signal was displayed and the operator handed up a message, 6 form 19 train orders and a clearance card to Head Brakeman Gaskill who in turn handed them to the engineman. After reading them Engineman Donnelly handed them back to the head brakeman and when he had apparently completed reading them, the engineman said, "We meet 2nd 92 at eastbound siding at Jewett, he takes the hole" and mentioned two other trains to be encountered farther west, to which the head brakeman answered, "right." The head brakeman then handed the orders to the fireman. By this time the speed had been increased to about 20 or 25 miles per hour and they were passing the slow board located three-fourths mile west of Pittsburgh Junction. Shortly thereafter he made a 15-pound brake-pipe reduction which reduced the speed to 15 or 20 miles per hour, and this brake application was not released until the engine had passed under the overhead railroad bridge when the head brakeman or fireman, announced seeing Second No. 92 in the distance.

When within 12 to 15 car lengths of Second 92, and running 15 or 20 miles per hour, the head brakeman advised him that that train was on the main track, and he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. Engineman Donnelly stated that he was familiar with the timetable yard-limit rule, and the timetable rule requiring all west-bound trains to approach the distant switch-signal indication, located 1,200 feet east of the east switch, prepared to stop, and to proceed from that point to Jewett station under full control. He admitted that he had not observed either rule in handling the train in the manner he did, but stated that many trains are handled through this territory in the same way and have been so handled for a long time. Although he knew of no rule to that effect, he was under the impression that eastward trains were never permitted to pass Jewett station until westward trains from Pittsburgh Junction had arrived. He was of the opinion that there was insufficient time between Pittsburgh Junction and the east switch at Jewett for two employees on the engine to read the message and six train orders and check the clearance card with the order numbers.

Fireman McAuley, of Train Third No. 95, stated that the message and six train orders received at Pittsburgh Junction were read by the engineman who then handed them to the head brakeman; the latter read them and in turn handed them to the fireman. Fireman McAuley, on the left-side seat-box, was reading the orders when the head brakeman, who was immediately behind him, called attention to Second 92 being 10 to 15 car lengths distant, at which time the fireman had not finished reading the orders. It was his opinion that he would require 4 or 5 minutes to read the six orders thoroughly.

Head Brakeman Gaskill, of Train Third No. 95, stated that before the train had proceeded a mile from Pittsburgh Junction the engineman handed him the orders and without reading them he handed them to the fireman. At that time, the engineman made some comment regarding the contents of the message and Brakeman Gaskill asked him if they had anything on Second 92. The engineman replied that Second 92 would clear on the east-bound siding at Jewett and Third 95 would go down the main track all the way. The engineman had applied the brakes when the train was about three quarters of a mile west of Pittsburgh Junction and as they passed under the overhead bridge at a speed of about 20 miles per hour, he released them. Shortly thereafter, while standing on the left side of the engine, he saw Second 92 on the main track a short distance ahead and told the engineman to apply the brakes in emergency. Head Brakeman Gaskill said that when orders are received on the engine, the engineman first reads them, then the fireman, and the head brakeman last; it was his opinion that it would have taken him about five minutes to read the six orders.

Conductor Craven and Flagman Diehl, of Third 95, stated they were on the caboose passing Pittsburgh Junction at 7:57 a.m., and after reading the orders, understood that Third 95 was to enter the eastbound siding at Jewett for Second 92. When the brake application made east of the overhead bridge was released, while the speed was still 15 or 20 miles per hour, the conductor thinking something was wrong was just about to open the caboose valve when an emergency application was felt and the train stopped within a distance of 20 or 25 car lengths.

Dispatcher Breymaier stated that he issued an order for Third 95 to enter the east-bound siding at Jewett to meet Second 92 for the purpose of saving 10 minutes to the latter train and to prevent the necessity of it stopping to close the switch on the ascending grade leaving Jewett, and said that this had been done on previous occasions. When he issued the order, he thought Second 92 would arrive at the meeting point in time to throw the switch for Third 95 and thought it was the custom of the train holding the main track to line the switch to the siding for the other train. Dispatcher Breymaier was of the opinion that it would be a safer practice to stop trains at Pittsburgh Junction and have the crews read their orders before leaving that point.

Engineman Taylor, of Second 92, stated that he was proceeding slowly on the main track and when within 6 or 7 car lengths of the fouling point, Third 95 was seen approaching near the overhead bridge. Judging from the speed of the approaching train, he saw that it would not be able to stop short of the switch so he reversed his engine and attempted to back up, but the engine wheels slipped and he was unable to do so. The statements of the fireman and head brakeman brought out no additional facts of importance.

Discussion

Train Third No. 95 received orders less than three miles from the point of accident fixing a meeting point with Train Second No. 92 and requiring Train Third No. 95 to take siding. The engineman was the first to read the orders and he apparently misread the order fixing the meeting point as he understood that Train Second No. 92 was to enter the east-bound siding at Jewett.

There is some discrepancy in the statements of the engineman, fireman and head brakeman of Train Third No. 95 as to whether or not the head brakeman read the orders; the engineman and fireman said that the head brakeman read them, while the latter said that he did not. The evidence is clear, however, that the fireman was engaged in reading the orders just before the collision occurred and had not read all of the orders

prior thereto; it is possible that the engineman's misunderstanding would have been discovered and corrected had all three of the men on the engine read the orders. Not more than 8 minutes elapsed between the time this train passed Pittsburgh Junction and the time of the accident; the engineman of Train Third No. 95 was of the opinion that this was insufficient time for two men on the engine to read all of the orders, and this opinion is supported by the estimates of the fireman and head brakeman that it would take from 4 to 5 minutes for each of them to read the orders. It was the responsibility of the crew of Train Third No. 95 to know and be governed by these orders, and necessary time should have been taken to insure that they were correctly understood.

An abridgement of Section 3333 of the Ohio laws is included in the W. & L.E. timetable as Special Instruction 50. This rule provides that at railroad crossings and junctions at grade, not interlocked, all trains will come to a full stop not nearer than 200 feet, nor farther than 800 feet from the crossing and will not cross until signalled to do so, or until the way is clear.

Train Third No. 95 entered the W. & L.E. main track without stopping and thereby did not comply with timetable rule No. 50; neither did it comply with the provisions of timetable rule No. 113, which reads as follows: "All west-bound trains will approach Pittsburgh Junction Telegraph Office under full control and will not proceed beyond clearance point of P. & W.Va. connection until they receive orders, clearance, or signal." Although timetable rules 50 and 113 are not directly involved in this accident, observance of them would have enabled all members of the crew to read and digest the contents of the orders before reaching the first possible point of restriction; however, it appears that Train Third No. 95 proceeded through Pittsburgh Junction in the customary manner.

The evidence is to the effect that approaching the east switch of the eastward siding at Jewett, this train was not being operated under full control as required by timetable rules Nos. 6 and 112. Officials of the W. & L.E. Ry. Co. should promptly take necessary steps to correct the lax operating practices disclosed by this investigation.

During the 30-day period prior to this accident, traffic over this line averaged approximately 25 trains daily. With this volume of traffic on a single-track line, and in view of the circumstances in this case, the carrier should give consideration to the need for the additional protection which would be provided by the installation of the block system on this line.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by failure of Train Third No. 95 to obey a meet order due to the order having been misread by the engineman; also by the failure of Train Third No. 95 to be operated under proper control within yard limits.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.