

Inv-2065

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
WHEELING & LAKE ERIE RAILWAY

PRYOR, OHIO

MAY 14, 1936

INVESTIGATION NO. 2065

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Wheeling & Lake Erie
Date:	May 14, 1936
Location:	Pryor, Ohio
Kind of accident:	Side collision
Trains involved:	Freight : Freight
Train numbers:	Extra : No. 43
Engine numbers:	6003 - 6011 : 4111
Consist:	43 cars, caboose : 7 cars, caboose
Speed:	10 - 20 m.p.h. : 5 m.p.h.
Track:	1 ^o curve, grade 0.4 percent descending eastward.
Weather:	Clear
Time:	9:50 a.m.
Casualties:	1 killed and 4 injured
Cause:	Failure to approach meeting point under control.

June 24, 1936.

To the Commission:

On May 14, 1936, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway at Pryor, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 4 employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the First District of the Toledo Division which extends between Ironville and Brewster, Ohio, a distance of 129.3 miles; this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the east switch of the westbound passing track at Pryor; this passing track is 5,623 feet in length and parallels the main track on the north; an eastbound passing track 3,824 feet in length parallels the main track on the south, the west switch of this passing track is located 437.5 feet west of the east switch of the westbound passing track. Approaching the point of accident from the west the track is tangent for about 2 miles, followed by a 1° curve to the left 4,384 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve, 784 feet from its eastern end. Approaching from the east the track is tangent for 4,000 feet, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred.

For a distance of about 2 miles the grade varies from 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent ascending for eastbound trains, to within 350 feet of the point of accident, then is 0.4 percent descending for about 4,000 feet.

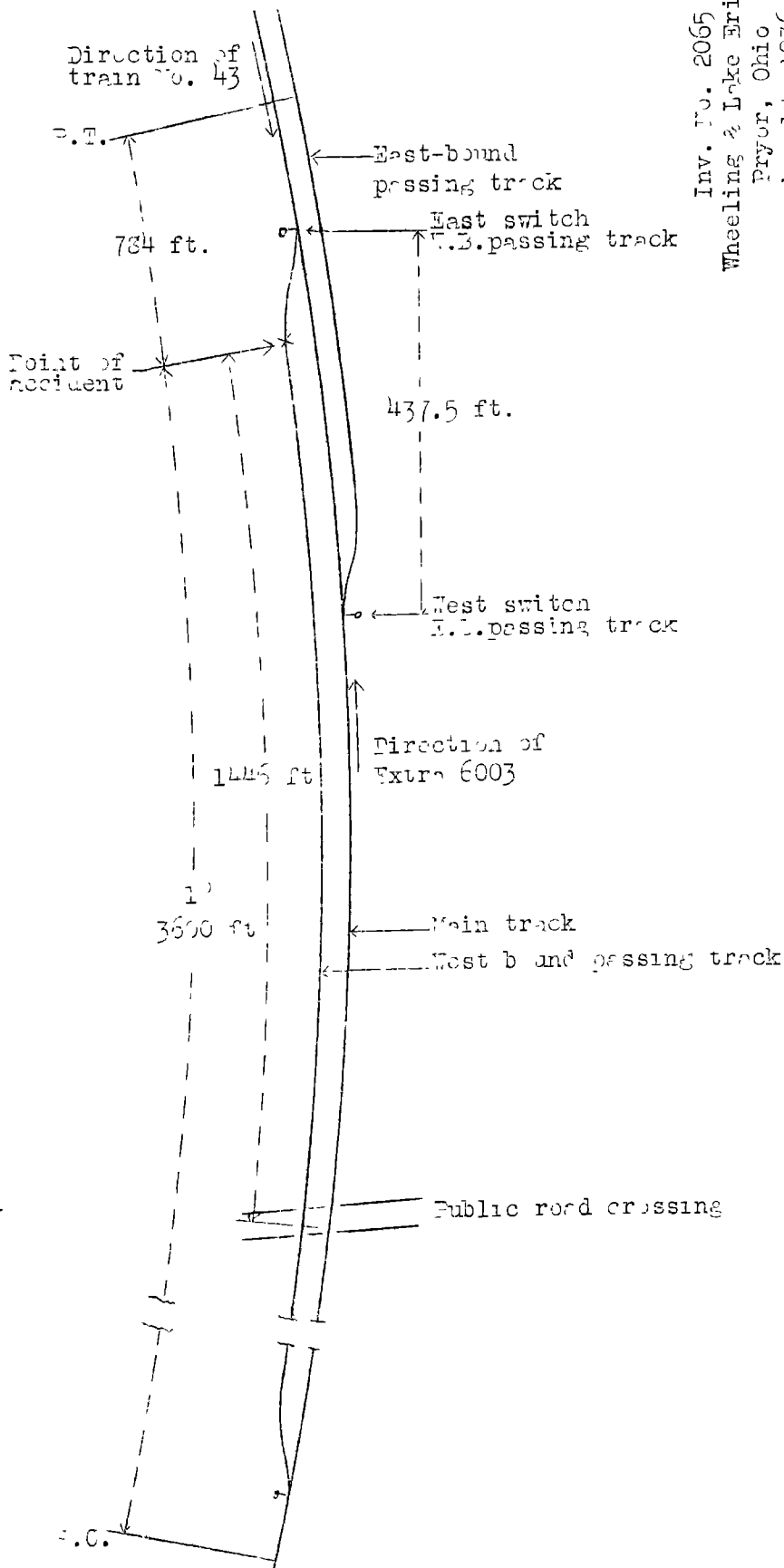
The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 9:50 a.m.

Description

Extra 6003, an eastbound freight train, consisted of 43 cars and a caboose, hauled by engines 6003 and 6011, and was in charge of Conductor Bodle and Enginemen Casson and Singer. This train departed from Ironville, 114.3 miles west of Pryor, at 12:25 a.m., according to the train sheet. At Creston, 12.1 miles west of Pryor, this crew received

Inv. No. 2065
Wheeling & Lake Erie Ry.
Pryor, Ohio
May 14, 1936

• Erewster, Ohio
13.9 mi.
• Orrville Jct.
1.1 mi.
* Pryor (P of 4)
3.7 mi.
• Smithville
3.4 mi.
• Creston
192.2 mi.
• Ironville, Ohio



train order 36, giving their train right over Train No. 43 to Orrville Junction. At Smithville, 3.7 miles west of Pryor, train order 41 was received, reading:

No. forty three 43 will meet extra 6003 east at Pryor.

After leaving Smithville, and while running at a speed estimated to have been between 10 and 20 miles per hour, Extra 6003 collided with the side of Train No. 43 at Pryor.

Train No. 43, a westbound freight train, consisted of 7 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 4111, and was in charge of Conductor Wehrley and Engineman Malone. This train departed from Brewster, 15 miles east of Pryor, at 8:10 a.m., 10 minutes late, according to the train sheet; at Orrville Junction, 1.1 miles east of Pryor, the crew received train orders Nos. 36 and 41, previously referred to, and while heading in at the east end of the westbound passing track at Pryor the second car was struck by Extra 6003.

Engine 6003 was turned over on its right side parallel with and to the right of the track with the rear end about 90 feet beyond the point of derailment, the tank remaining upright and parallel with the track; engine 6011 was tipped partly over to the right of the track; both trucks of the first car were derailed. The second car in Train No. 43 was demolished, the third and fourth cars were derailed, and the front end of the fifth car was badly damaged.

The employee killed was the head brakeman of Extra 6003; the employees injured were the engineman and fireman of engine 6003, the fireman of engine 6011, and the conductor of Train No. 43.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Malone, of Train No. 43, stated that he received train orders at Orrville Junction to meet Extra 6003 at Pryor and giving that train right over Train No. 43. Train No. 43 departed from Orrville Junction about 9:42 a.m., and was heading in the east end of the westbound passing track at Pryor, moving about 4 miles per hour, when struck by Extra 6003. He saw Extra 6003 approaching when that train was about 15 car lengths away and he estimated its speed to have been about 20 miles per hour at that time; he did not hear its whistle nor did he notice whether or not the brakes were applied on the train, or notice anything unusual about its

movement, and he thought it would be stopped without incident.

Fireman Markham, of Train No. 43, stated that as his train was heading in on the passing track he saw Extra 6003 approaching at least 25 car lengths away and both engines were shut off from the time they first came in sight; the first indication he had that Extra 6003 was not going to stop was when the approaching engines were about one car length from his engine; he estimated the speed of the extra to have been about 15 miles per hour, and the speed of his own train about 5 miles per hour when the accident occurred; he did not see or hear anything to denote whether the brakes were set on Extra 6003.

Conductor Wehrley, of Train No. 43, stated that after receiving the two train orders at Orrville Jct. he gave a copy of the orders and clearance card to Head Brakeman Hutchins for delivery to the engineman, with instructions to head in at the westbound siding at Pryor.

Head Brakeman Hutchins, of Train No. 43, stated that he was on the front footboard of his engine when the accident occurred. He noticed Extra 6003 when they were about 20 car lengths away and thought that train was moving about 20 miles per hour, and when about 10 or 15 car lengths away he attempted to stop it by hand signals but could see no one on the left side of either of the approaching engines.

Engineman Cassen, of Extra 6003, stated that the air brakes were tested by the air inspector at Toledo, who informed him the brakes were all working. Engineman Cassen received train order 36 at Creston and at Smithville received train order 41, which was read by himself, his fireman and the head brakeman and they all understood that Train No. 43 was to clear on the westbound passing track at Pryor. Approaching Pryor his train was moving at a speed of about 35 miles per hour and when near the west switch of the westbound passing track he made a 10-pound brake pipe reduction which reduced the speed of the train to about 15 or 18 miles per hour. Head Brakeman Bostler was on the left side of the cab and called to him 3 or 4 times that the local was in to clear on the eastbound siding; due to being on the outside of the curve Engineman Cassen was unable to see Train No. 43 himself. He released the brakes when about 20 car lengths west of the west switch of the eastbound passing track and the train had moved but 4 or 5 car lengths farther when Fireman Harmon, who had just gotten on his seat box, called to him that Train No. 43 was pulling in the westbound passing track; Engineman Cassen immediately applied the brakes in emergency and both

he and the fireman jumped off. He thought his train was moving about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. He stated he had made several stops en route and had experienced no trouble with the brakes at any time and said they seemed to take hold properly when applied approaching Pryor; he could not account for the train not stopping on this occasion unless the train line was not recharged after releasing the brakes, or he was closer to the switch than he realized.

Fireman Harmon, of Extra 6003, stated he was on the deck wetting down the coal; both engines were shut off when approaching Pryor passing track; he expected to stop at the westward passing track to meet the local, and heard Brakeman Bostler say several times that No. 43 was in to clear on the eastward siding; he finished his work and when getting on the seat box he saw the local heading in on the westward passing track and told Engineman Casson they were going to hit, and then jumped off on the right side. He was unable to say whether or not the brakes had been applied approaching Pryor, but said a drifting throttle was being used on engine 6003 and that engine 6011 was not working steam, and that the speed at the time of the accident was not more than 12 miles per hour. He also stated that when approaching from the west it was possible to determine from the left side of an engine, for a distance of 20 car lengths, whether or not a train was on the eastbound passing track.

Engineman Singer, of engine 6011, stated that at Smithville he received the order to meet No. 43 at Pryor; he handed the order to his fireman and both of them understood that Train No. 43 was to enter the westbound siding. His statements were practically the same as Engineman Cassen's as to the reduction of air and the speed when approaching Pryor; he had no intimation that the train would run by the switch, and therefore took no action himself to stop the train; he estimated the speed to have been 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident and figured the train was under control at the time Engineman Cassen released the brakes; he stated the rule requires that a train be under control and stop to clear at meeting points. He said he noticed nothing unusual about the handling of the train after leaving Creston, and that there had been no trouble in stopping at any point.

Fireman Keith of Engine 6011 stated that Extra 6003 reduced speed to about 20 miles per hour approaching the west switch of the westbound passing track at Pryor; he was looking ahead from the left side of the cab and when about

25 car lengths from the east switch he could see Train No. 43 but could not tell its exact location; he did not notice any application of the brakes, the reduction in speed apparently being due to the throttle having been closed.

Conductor Bodle stated that approaching Pryor he was in the right side of the cupola of the caboose; the speed of the train was about 30 miles per hour when the caboose passed the west switch of the westbound passing track and a 10-pound service application of the brakes was made at that time. This was the only application of the brakes that he observed and it was quickly followed by the accident. He estimated the speed of the train at the time of the accident to have been between 15 and 20 miles per hour. After the accident Engineman Cassen told him that Brakeman Bostler had said Train No. 43 was in the clear.

Brakeman Maughiman of Extra 6003 was in the cupola on the left side of the caboose approaching Pryor; he saw the smoke of Train No. 43 before the caboose reached the west switch of the westward passing track, but was unable to tell the exact location of that train. He estimated the speed of Extra 6003 to have been about 35 miles per hour at the time; both engines of his train were still working steam and he remarked to the conductor "I wonder if he is not going to use the air pretty soon". He was watching the air gauge in the caboose and after his caboose had passed the west switch he noticed that a 10-pound reduction of air was made, which was the only reduction made prior to the accident and which reduced the speed of the train to about 20 miles per hour; about 10 seconds later he felt the impact of the collision. He estimated the speed at the time of the accident to have been between 15 and 20 miles per hour.

Car Inspector Belkofer, stated he tested the air brakes of Extra 6003 on the yard air line at Homestead Yard and found the brakes all working properly.

Discussion

Under the orders Extra 6003 and Train No. 43 were to meet at Pryor, Train No. 43 to take siding. There was no misunderstanding of these orders; Train No. 43 was entering the westbound passing track at its east end and Engineman Cassen of Extra 6003 was preparing to stop his train short of the switch at that point, having made a service application of the brakes which, according to his statement, reduced the speed of his train from about 35 to 15 or 18 miles per hour. On account of the curvature his view of the track ahead was obscured, but the head brakeman who was on the left side of the cab told

him that Train No. 43 was in to clear on the eastbound siding, and he thereupon released the brakes. When the fireman discovered that the opposing train was not in to clear on the eastbound siding but was pulling into the westbound passing track Engineman Cassen made an emergency application of the brakes, but it is questionable whether this application was fully effective because of the prior service application and it was then too late to stop in time to avert the collision. Engineman Cassen and Fireman Harmon both stated that Brakeman Bostler said several times that Train No. 43 was in to clear on the eastward siding; as Brakeman Bostler was killed in the accident it could not be determined why he gave this incorrect information.

Engineman Singer of Engine 6011 thought the train was under control at the time Engineman Cassen released the brakes, but estimated the speed of the train at the time of the accident at about 20 miles per hour, while according to the conductor and rear brakeman the brakes were applied about the time the rear end of the train passed the west switch of the westbound passing track and this application was quickly followed by the shock of the collision.

The weight of evidence is to the effect that Extra 6003 was moving between 15 to 20 miles per hour at the time the collision occurred. Had Engineman Cassen operated his train under proper control approaching the meeting point he should have been able to bring it to a stop before fouling the meeting point switch even though Brakeman Bostler had given him incorrect information regarding the location of Train No. 43.

A traffic check covering the 30-day period immediately preceding the date of this accident, disclosed that there was an average daily movement of 14.7 trains over this portion of track. Traffic of such density warrants consideration as to the need of additional protection which would be afforded by the block-signal system.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Cassen, of Extra 6003, properly to control the speed of his train approaching a meeting point.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.