Inv-2178

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

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ACCIDENT ON THE

ERIE RAILROAD

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MARION, OHIO

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JUNE 9, 1937

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2178

SUMMARY

Inv-2178

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| Railroad: | Erie | | |
| Date: | June 9, 1937 | | |
| Location: | Marion, Ohio | | |
| Kind of accident: | Yard collision | | |
| Trains involved: | Work train | : | Cut of cars |
| Engine numbers: | 3003 | : | 241 |
| Consist: | 5 cars | : | 31 cars being shoved westward ahead of engine |
| Speed: | Standing | : | 4-10 m.p.h. |
| Track: | Tangent; grade 0.3 percent descending westward | | |
| Weather: | Partly cloudy | | |
| Time: | 11:25 a.m. | | |
| Casualties: | 1 killed; 7 injured. | | |
| Cause: | Proceed signal given when yard-switch was improperly lined. | | |

July 21, 1937.

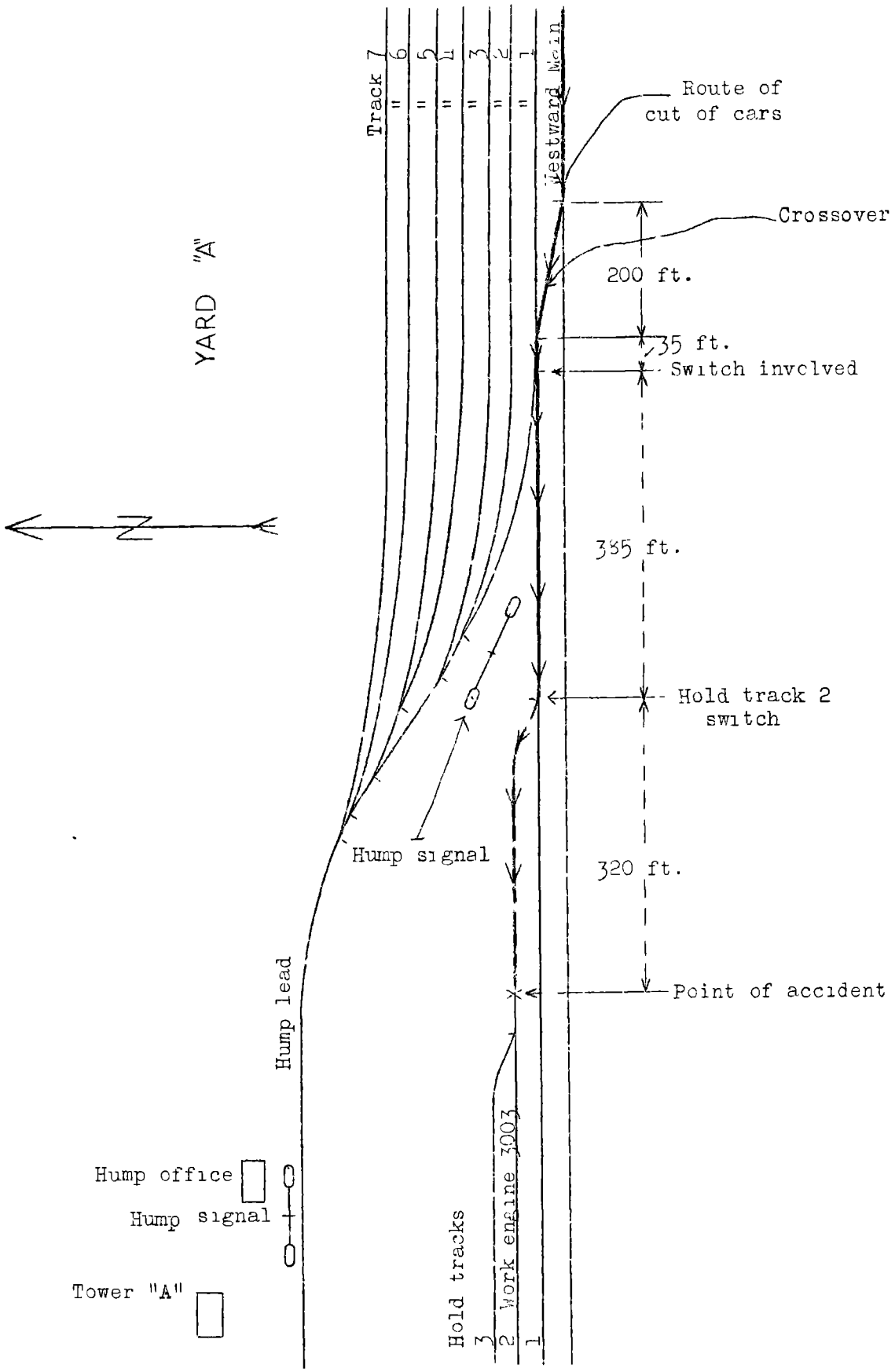
To the Commission:

On June 9, 1937, there was a collision between a work train and a cut of cars, being shoved by a yard engine, on the Erie Railroad at Marion, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one section laborer and the injury of seven section laborers.

## Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Kent Division, in Yard "A" at Marion where general terminal facilities, including several yards and humps, are located. Yard "A" comprises two groups of tracks, one of which consists of seven westward receiving tracks, and the other of three hold tracks; each group is numbered consecutively from south to north with track 1 common to both groups. The lead at the west end of the receiving tracks is also an approach track to the westward hump, and the switch at the junction of this lead with track 1 is 385 feet east of the switch at the east end of hold track 2, and approximately 1,200 feet southeast of the crest of the hump. The westward main track closely parallels track 1 on the south, and joins that track through a facing-point cross-over, 200 feet long. This cross-over is called MJ cross-over and its west switch is located 35 feet east of the switch leading to the hump approach track. Movements in these yards are made in accordance with yard rules, under the supervision of a yardmaster. The accident occurred on hold track 2 at a point 320 feet west of the east end of that track. Receiving tracks 2 and 3 were clear at the time, and there were no cars on the west end of the other receiving tracks. All of the tracks with which this report deals were tangent except MJ cross-over, the turnout leading to hold track 2, and the turnout leading to the hump approach track. The grade in the vicinity of the point of accident is about 0.3 percent descending westward.

The switch at the junction of track 1 and the hump approach track is equipped with a Ramapo No. 6 switch stand located between the westward main track and track 1. The centers of the banners of this switch are 13 inches above the head block; when the switch is lined for a movement along track 1 an arrow-shaped red banner is displayed and when lined for a movement on the hump approach track a rectangular white banner 6 by 8 inches is displayed. Switch lamps are mounted above the targets. Humping movements from the receiving yard tracks are governed by three signals of the

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color-light type, one located at the crest of the hump, one about 750 feet east of the hump and 50 feet north of the westward main track and one about 2,400 feet east of the hump and 50 feet north of the westward main track. These signals operate in unison and are under control of both the conductor, at the crest of the hump, and a retarder operator stationed in a tower located a short distance west of the crest of the hump. Other safety features include an electric fog horn and siren, which are used to give emergency stop signals.

The weather was partly cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:25 a.m.

## Description

Engine 3003, headed west, and assigned to work train service, was engaged in distributing cinders on the hold tracks in yard "A". The train, consisting of five open top cars coupled ahead of the engine, and in charge of Conductor Doll and Engineman Flickenger, was standing in the east end of hold track 2, with the rear of the engine 320 feet west of the east switch, when it was struck by a cut of cars being shoved by engine 241.

Hump engine 241, headed west, in charge of Conductor Carskadden and Engineman Christ, was shoving a cut of 31 cars westward through MJ cross-over with the intention of putting it over the hump, but due to the switch leading from track 1 to the hump approach track being improperly lined, the cut was shoved into hold track 2 where it struck the rear end of engine 3003 while moving at a speed estimated at from 4 to 10 miles per hour.

None of the equipment in either train was derailed, but the force of the impact drove the work train westward a distance of 158 feet; three of the cars that were being shoved by hump engine 241 were damaged. The employees killed and injured were section laborers working in the third car of the work train.

## Summary of Evidence

Head Brakeman Coffey, of hump engine 241, stated that his engine had pulled a cut of cars eastward on the west-bound track far enough to clear MJ cross-over; he got off the car next to the engine, at the cross-over, lined the west cross-over switch, and gave stop signals when the cut of cars had passed the east cross-over switch. He then lined the east cross-over switch,

and gave a proceed signal to the conductor at the top of the hump, who displayed a green indication on the hump signals, and the cars started to move westward through the cross-over. Brakeman Coffey who was to remain at the cross-over in order to restore the switches, had failed to notice that the switch leading to the hump approach track was improperly lined for the intended movement until the west car of the cut was about 7 or 8 car lengths west of the switch. He immediately gave stop signals to his engineman who was about 18 or 20 car lengths away, and continued to do so until the collision occurred, and while there were no cars on the adjacent receiving tracks to interfere with the view of the stop signals, he did not notice the slack run out immediately; however, the speed was reduced from about 12 miles per hour to about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred. He saw the hump signals change from green to red after the collision. He knew that the work train crew had been working on the hold track all morning, but it did not occur to him that the switch involved might be lined for other than the hump lead track, as it is the practice of almost every one in the yard to line it for the hump lead track after using it, although he has never seen any instructions requiring it.

Engineman Christ, of engine 241, stated that Fireman Hirth was operating the engine at the time of the accident and he was on the fireman's side of the cab, so that the signals given by Brakeman Coffey and the indication given by the signal at the top of the hump were not visible to him. A speed of about 12 miles per hour had been attained and the engine was drifting when the brake was applied by the fireman, and a few seconds later while they were moving about 8 or 10 miles per hour the collision occurred. He stated that the air brakes on engine 241 worked properly.

Fireman Hirth stated that he was handling engine 241 at the time of the accident. When he received a green indication on the hump signal he started shoving the cars westward ahead of the engine, and after moving about 10 car lengths he received hand stop signals from Head Brakeman Coffey who was on the ground at the cross-over; at that time the speed was about 8 or 10 miles per hour, and the hump signal still displayed a green indication. He immediately applied the straight air brake, after which the cut of cars moved about five car lengths and the speed was reduced to about 4 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The hump signal indication changed from green to red, and the fog horn sounded just before the collision occurred. He stated that the brakes worked properly, and that from his position he was unable to tell which track the cut of cars was following.

Conductor Carskadden, of engine 241, was at the signal on the hump during the entire movement. The first he knew of anything wrong was when Retarder Operator Jacoby sounded the horn in tower "A" at the top of the hump, giving warning of danger, at which time the cars were heading in on the hold track and had reached a point about 6 or 7 car lengths west of the switch. The tower operator had already changed the hump signal indication from green to red. Conductor Carskadden also sounded the alarm horn and shouted to the section laborers working in the cars. He said that after Brakeman Coffey gave him a proceed signal, and he saw the cut of cars coming through the cross-over, he thought that the switch was properly lined and did not watch the movement continuously. It did not occur to him that the switch involved might be lined for the hold tracks, as he had worked on the hump since it was put into operation and had never before seen that switch left in position for the hold tracks. No member of the crew was on the head car as the cut moved through the cross-over and into the hold tracks.

Rear Brakeman Griffith, working as field man with engine 241, lined the switches on the ladder track for the movement over the hump, but did not pay any attention to the position of the switches in the vicinity of the cross-over as Brakeman Coffey was to handle them. Shortly afterward the warning horn sounded, he noticed that the cars were headed into the hold track and were about 8 car lengths from work train engine 3003, moving at a speed of about 10 or 12 miles per hour. He did not know of any instructions requiring that the switch involved be left lined for any particular route but usually had found it lined for the hump, although he had found it lined for the hold tracks on some occasions.

According to the statements of the crew of work train engine 3003, none was aware of anything wrong until the siren sounded; the collision occurred very soon afterward. Conductor Doll was on the ground giving the signals necessary to the unloading of cinders. When he first noticed the approaching cars they were about 8 or 10 car lengths from his train; he could not get his train in motion before the collision. In the past he had found the switch involved lined in either position, and he did not know of any instructions requiring the switch to be left set for any particular route. Engineman Flickenger and Fireman Mahaffey had their backs to the approaching cars; they agreed that the last time engine 3003 had used the switch, was about 1 hour prior to the accident. Brakeman Wiles was on the third car and Brakeman Garver was at the hump office when the accident occurred. Brakeman Wiles opened the switch when the work train first entered the hold tracks, but did not handle it again; Brakeman Garver did not operate the switch at all, but left it lined for the hold tracks as he expected his train would use it again.

Retarder Operator Jacoby, in tower "A", stated that shortly after the westward movement through the cross-over had started he noticed that the cars were moving on the hold track, instead of on the hump lead, and he immediately changed the hump signal indication from green to red and sounded the horn. At that time the cars were about 10 car lengths east of the work train, moving at a speed of 8 or 10 miles per hour, and this speed was maintained until the collision occurred.

Yard Master Pohler stated that there was nothing unusual about the intended movement and that similar movements were frequently made. There are no instructions requiring that the switch involved be left lined in any certain position.

## Discussion.

The evidence disclosed that when work train, engine 3003, last used the switch at the junction of the hump approach track with track 1, the switch was left set for track 1. Some time later, hump engine 241 pulled a cut of cars down the westward main track for the purpose of shoving it through M J cross-over and on the hump approach track to the crest of the hump. Due to the fact that the position of the switch leading to the hold tracks was not noticed by the brakeman lining the switches, the cut of cars followed hold track 1 instead of the hump approach track and then headed in upon hold track 2 and had reached a point so close to the work train before the error was discovered that stop signals given by the brakeman who had permitted the misdirection and by the employees at the top of the hump, could not be obeyed quickly enough to prevent a collision. There was no one on the leading car at the time of the accident. There is no rule or instruction requiring that the switch involved be lined for any particular route, and rule 103 which requires that when cars are pushed by an engine a trainman must take a conspicuous position on the leading car, specifically excepts movements made in shifting or making up or breaking up trains, or distributing cars in yards. Hump Conductor Carskadden did not accompany his engine while it was making the movement, and the statement of Yardmaster Pohler indicates that this was not unusual; however, had the conductor closely observed the movement from his position on the hump, more time would have been available in which to act upon the warning signals given.

## Conclusions.

This accident was caused by failure of a brakeman to know that a switch was properly lined for an intended movement before a proceed signal indication was given.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,
Director.