

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3816

WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY

AND

THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

GIBSON CITY, ILL

AUGUST 11, 1958

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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DATE	August 11, 1958	
RAILROADS	Wabash	New York, Chicago and St. Louis
LOCATION	Gibson City, Ill	
KIND OF ACCIDENT	Collision	
EQUIPMENT INVOLVED	Track motorcar	Freight train
TRAIN NUMBER		62
LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER		Diesel-electric units 548 and 549
CONSIST		27 cars, caboose
SPEEDS	5 m p h	37 m p h
OPERATION	Interlocking	
TRACKS	Single, tangent, 0.25 percent descending grade southward	Single, tangent, level
WEATHER	Clear	
TIME	2:30 p m	
CASUALTIES	1 killed	
CAUSE	Failure to take required precautions in operation of track motorcar	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3816

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

WABASH RAILROAD COMPANY
and
THE NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND ST LOUIS RAILROAD COMPANY

November 24, 1958

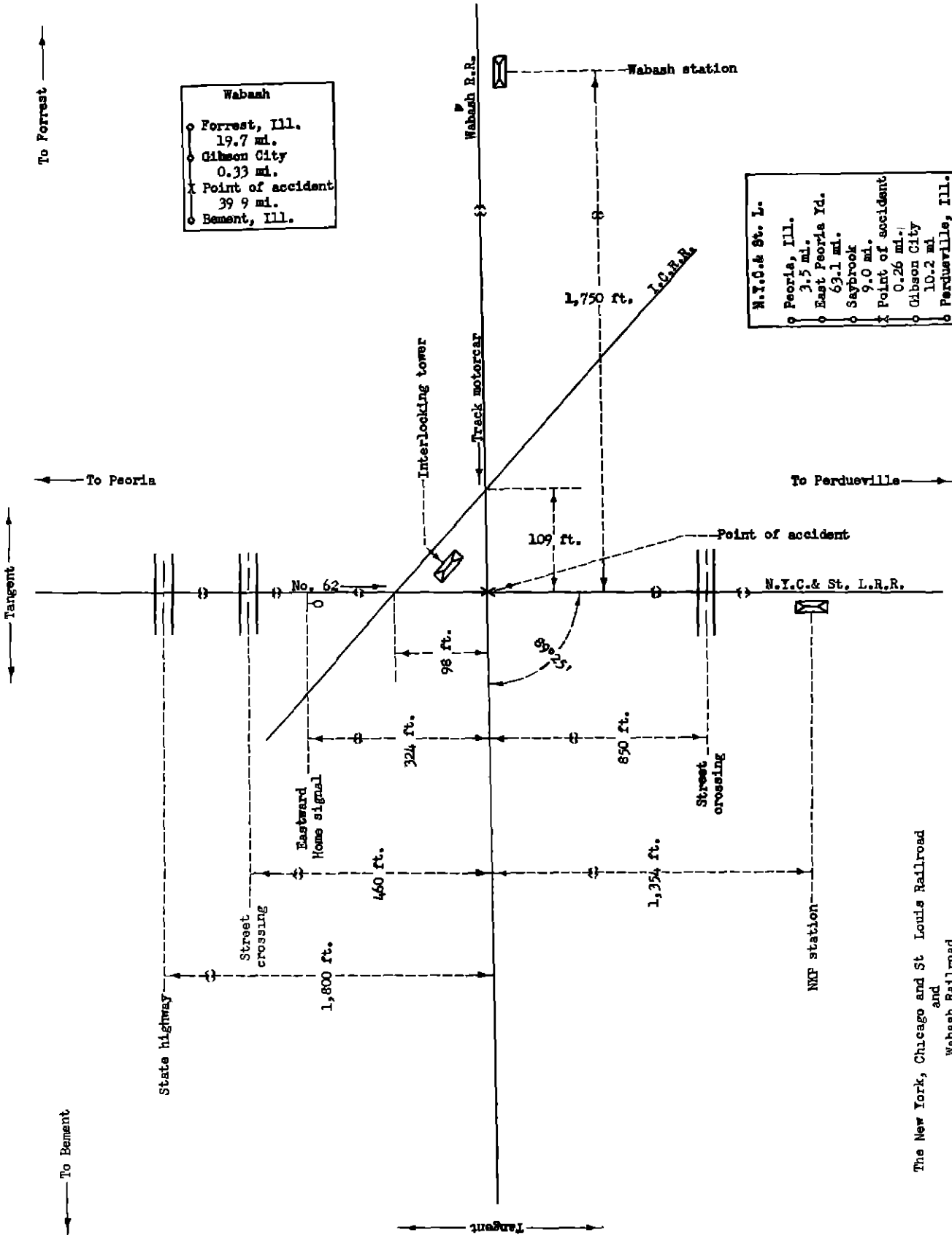
Accident at Gibson City, Ill , on August 11, 1958, caused by failure to take required precautions in the operation of a track motorcar

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

TUGGLE, Commissioner

On August 11, 1958, there was a collision between a track motorcar on the Wabash Railroad and a freight train on the New York, Chicago and St Louis Railroad at Gibson City, Ill , which resulted in the death of a signal maintainer

¹ Under authority of section 17 (2) of the *Interstate Commerce Act* the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Tuggle for consideration and disposition



The New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad
and
Wabash Railroad
Gibson City, Ill.
August 11, 1958

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred at the intersection of the Wabash Railroad and the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad hereinafter referred to as the NKP, at Gibson City, Ill. The accident occurred on that part of the Decatur Division of the Wabash extending between Forrest and Bement, Ill., 59.9 miles, and on that part of the Peoria Division of the NKP extending between Peoria and Perdueville, Ill., 86.1 miles. The intersection is 20.02 miles south of Forrest and 1,750 feet south of the Wabash station at Gibson City, and 75.64 miles east of Peoria and 1,354 feet west of the NKP station at Gibson City. The lines intersect at an angle of 89°25'. In the vicinity of the point of accident the Wabash is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The track is tangent for a considerable distance north and south of the point of accident. The grade for southbound trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 0.25 percent descending. In the vicinity of the point of accident the NKP is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The track is tangent for a considerable distance east and west of the point of accident. The grade for eastbound trains is 0.17 percent ascending 600 feet to the intersection and it is level over the crossing.

Train movements over the crossing are governed by interlocking signals. The semi-automatic home signal, governing eastbound NKP movements over the crossing, is located 324 feet west of the crossing.

Within the interlocking limits, a single-track line of the Illinois Central Railroad Company crosses the Wabash line at an angle of 42°20' and the NKP line at an angle of 47°40' at points, respectively, 109 feet north and 98 feet west of the crossing where the accident occurred. The interlocking tower is within the triangle formed by the lines of the three railroads. It is a two-story building about 26 feet in length and 14 feet in width, parallel to the Illinois Central Railroad, and about 11 feet from the main track of that railroad. The northeast corner of the building is 31.9 feet west of the Wabash main track, and the southeast corner is 16.2 feet north of the NKP main track. It is provided with an outside stairway on the south side, facing the NKP main track.

A state highway and two city streets intersect the NKP main track at points, respectively, about 1800 feet west, 460 feet west, and 850 feet east of the point of accident.

The Wabash rules and regulations for the operation of track motorcars read in part as follows:

299 Operation over Highway and Railroad Crossings At highway and railroad crossings, track cars shall be operated under complete control and at such reduced speed as will prevent an accident. Cars must come to a full stop at such crossings where the vision is in any way restricted * * *. Where only one man is with track car, he will stop and push car over crossing.

* * *

The operating rules of the NKP read in part as follows:

14 ENGINE AND MOTOR CAR WHISTLE SIGNALS

SOUND

INDICATION

* * *

(1) — — o — —

Approaching public crossings at grade
To be prolonged or repeated until
crossing is reached

BLOCK SIGNAL, * * * AND INTERLOCKING RULES**DEFINITIONS**

HOME SIGNAL -- A fixed signal at the entrance of a route or block to govern trains or engines entering and using that route or block

The maximum authorized speeds in the vicinity of the point of accident were 25 miles per hour for the Wabash track motorcar and 40 miles per hour for the NKP freight train

Description of Accident

About 2 30 p m , a track motorcar occupied by a signal maintainer departed southbound on the Wabash main track from a point approximately 35 feet north of the NKP crossing in Gibson City. A few moments later, while moving over the crossing at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour, the track motorcar was struck by No 62

No 62, a NKP eastbound second-class freight train, consisted of road-switcher type diesel-electric units 548 and 549, coupled in multiple-unit control, 27 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from East Peoria Yard, 3 5 miles east of Peoria, at 12 10 p m , 1 hour 40 minutes late, passed Saybrook, the last open office, 9 3 miles west of Gibson City, at 2 17 p m , 44 minutes late, passed the eastward interlocking home signal, which indicated proceed, and while moving at a speed of 37 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck the track motorcar

The track motorcar stopped south of the NKP main track at a point 422 feet east of the crossing. It was demolished. The locomotive of No 62 stopped at a point 1,225 feet east of the crossing, and the front diesel-electric unit was slightly damaged

The signal maintainer was killed

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2 30 p m

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average NKP daily movement over the crossing was 6 13 trains

The track motorcar was of the belt-drive type, powered by a 5 to 8 horsepower engine and was equipped with 4-wheel brakes. It was provided with a metal top, a windshield, and a safety rail at the rear end. It weighed approximately 625 pounds

Discussion

On the day of the accident the signal maintainer was operating a track motorcar on the Wabash between Gibson City and Lotus, 11 3 miles south of Gibson City, making inspections of signal equipment. About 2 15 p m he stopped the track motorcar on the Wabash main track at a point about 35 feet north of the NKP crossing. He then proceeded to the second floor of the tower, where he engaged in conversation with the tower operator. The operator said that the conversation did not deal with any NKP train movement. The signal maintainer departed from the interlocking tower about 2 30 p m , and returned to the track motorcar. The operator said that the signal maintainer then started the engine of the track motorcar and proceeded southbound toward the NKP crossing. He said that the track motorcar had attained a speed of about 5 to 10 miles per hour as it moved on the the NKP crossing, where it was struck by No 62

As No 62 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed of the train was 37 miles per hour as indicated by the speed-recording device. The enginemen and the front brakeman were in the control compartment of the first diesel-electric unit, the swing brakeman was in the control compartment of the second diesel-electric unit, the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted. The eastward home signal of the interlocking at Gibson City indicated proceed. The members of the crew on the locomotive said that the bell and the crossing whistle were sounded on the locomotive as the train approached and moved over the state highway and a city street located, respectively, about 1800 feet and 450 feet west of the crossing where the accident occurred, and that as the locomotive closely approached the point of accident the bell and crossing whistle were being sounded for a city street crossing located approximately 850 feet east of the point of accident. The front brakeman said that he first saw the southbound track motorcar on the Wabash main track when it was about 15 feet north of the NKP crossing, and that he called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately initiated an emergency application of the brakes, but the speed of the train was not materially reduced before the collision occurred.

After the signal maintainer descended the outside stairway from the second floor of the interlocking tower and reboarded the track motorcar, his view of the NKP main track west of the point of accident was restricted by the interlocking tower to a distance of about 100 feet.

The rules of the carrier require that when only one man is with a track motorcar approaching a railroad crossing, he will stop and push car over crossing. Since the signal maintainer was killed in the accident, it could not be determined why he failed to take the required precautions before moving the track motorcar over the crossing.

During the past 10 years the Commission has investigated 69 collisions, including the present case, in which track motorcars were involved. These accidents resulted in the death of 88 persons and the injury of 186 persons.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to take required precautions in the operation of a track motorcar.

Dated at Washington, D C , this twenty-fourth
day of November, 1958

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle

(SEAL)

HAROLD D McCOY,

Secretary