

Inv-2209

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR
BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN AND HARTFORD RAILROAD

SOUTH NORWALK, CONN.

OCTOBER 18, 1937.

INVESTIGATION NO. 2209

SUMMARY

Inv-2209

Railroad: New York, New Haven and Hartford

Date: October 18, 1937.

Location: South Norwalk, Conn.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Light engine : Light engine

Engine numbers: 458 : 0312

Speed: Standing : 6-15 m.p.h.

Track: 1°16' left curve;
0.85 percent descending northward

Weather: Clear and dark

Time: 5:45 p. m.

Casualties: 4 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed
of motor 0312 on a siding. Con-
tributory cause - failure of crew
of engine 458 to display night
signals.

Inv-2209

November 3, 1937.

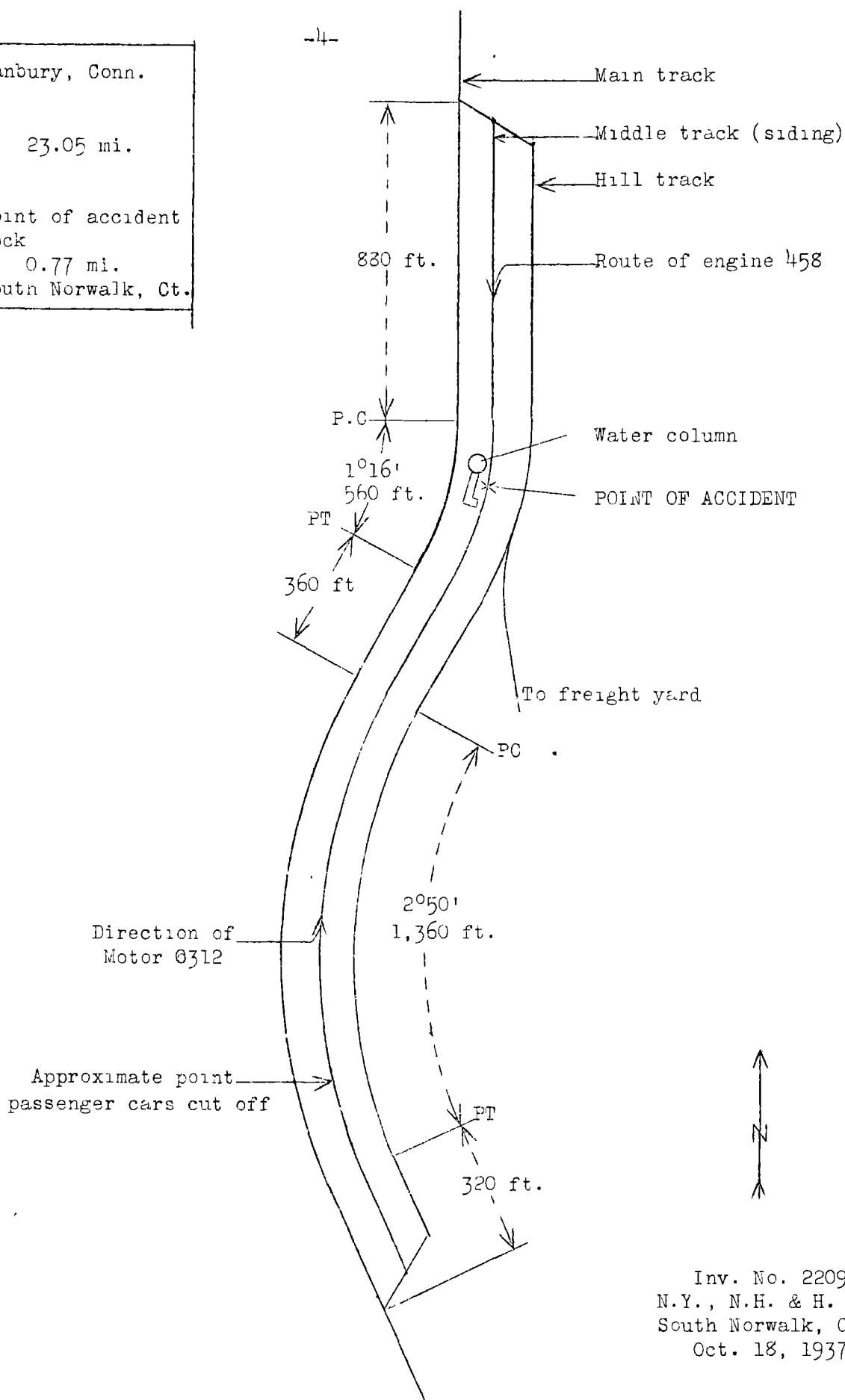
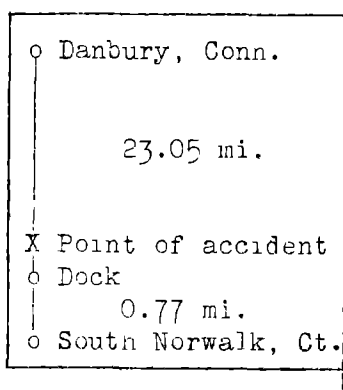
To the Commission:

On October 18, 1937, there was a rear-end collision between two light engines on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad at South Norwalk, Conn., which resulted in the injury of four employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the New Haven Division which extends between South Norwalk and Danbury, Conn., a distance of 23.82 miles. Beginning at the south end of "Dock" yard at South Norwalk, two tracks, known as the "middle" and "hill" tracks, branch off from the main track and parallel it on the east for a distance of approximately 3,700 feet; the accident occurred on the middle track, which is used as a siding, at a water column located between the main and middle tracks about 2,400 feet north of the south end of this yard. Approaching from the south there is a 1°16' curve to the left, the point of accident being about 300 feet north of the south end of this curve; the grade is 0.85 percent descending.

Rule 9 provides that night signals must be displayed from sunset to sunrise. Rule 18a provides that by night a detached road engine, when in yards under conditions not requiring display of markers, shall display a red light to the rear. Rule 105



Inv. No. 2209
 N.Y., N.H. & H. R.R.
 South Norwalk, Conn.
 Oct. 18, 1937

provides that a train using a siding must proceed expecting to find it occupied by other trains.

The weather was clear but it was dark at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 5:45 p. m.

Description

Engine 458, in charge of Engineman Lee, had been detached from its train on arrival in Dock yard about 5:35 p. m., pulled out on hill track to the middle track switch and then backed up the middle track, or siding, to the water column where it had been standing several minutes when its rear end was struck by motor 0312.

Motor 0312, in charge of Engineman Hayes, had arrived at South Norwalk at 5:35 p.m., having fulfilled the schedule of Train No. 348. The passenger equipment was pulled into the middle track and cut off at a point about 900 feet north of the south switch, for the purpose of running around the equipment. The engine proceeded northward on the middle track a distance of about 1,500 feet where it collided with engine 458 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been from 6 to 15 miles per hour.

Engine 458 was driven forward and stopped about an engine length from motor 0312 but neither was derailed. The tender of engine 458 and the forward end of motor 0312 were considerably damaged. The employees injured were the engineman and fireman of engine 458 and the fireman and passenger brakeman of motor 0312.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Hayes, of motor 0312, stated that after discharging passengers from No. 348 at South Norwalk he proceeded with the empty equipment to Dock yard and entered the south end of the middle track. The equipment was cut off at a point about 940 feet north of the south switch. It was his intention to run around his train by going to the north end of the middle track and come back through the hill track to the south end. After the cars were cut off, he proceeded northward on the middle track at a speed of about 10 miles per hour at which time the headlight was burning brightly; he thought the fireman was in the front cab from the time the engine was uncoupled from the train until the accident occurred. The engineman had shut off power but there were no air-brake applications until the emergency application was made and the whistle was sounded at the time he saw the fireman of engine 458 standing on top of the tender and the water running from the spout about 300 feet distant. Engineman Hayes said there was no light on the tender of engine 458; if there had been one he would have seen it in time to stop short of that engine. He said he would not expect a light to be placed on cars that might be left on that track and he stated that he understood that he was required to operate his motor on this track expecting to find it obstructed.

Fireman O'Meara, of motor 0312, stated that when proceeding towards the water column he was in the front cab but that he

started back through the motor for the purpose of starting a fire under the boiler in order to have steam for heating the train on the return trip to New York. He saw no obstruction ahead and the headlight was shining brightly; he had gotten back about 15 feet when he felt an emergency application of the brakes which was followed in a few seconds by the collision, which he thought was not of much greater impact than an ordinary coupling and thought the speed was not much in excess of 5 or 6 miles per hour. Fireman O'Meara stated that he knew it was his duty to remain in the operating cab to observe signals and keep a sharp lookout while moving through yards. After the collision he went forward and said he did not see any light on the rear of engine 458.

Brakeman MacLean, of motor C312, stated he was on the rear platform of the motor when he heard the whistle sounded and felt the brakes being applied in emergency, at which time he estimated the speed to have been between 10 and 15 miles per hour and the collision occurred immediately thereafter. He thought the speed had been reduced somewhat when the driving wheels locked and slid on the rails. At the time of the collision it was nearly dark and his lantern was lit.

Engineer Lee, of engine 458, stated that his engine was detached from its train at South Norwalk at about 5:35 p. m. and he proceeded onto the middle track and spotted his engine at the water column at about 5:40 p. m. His fireman was on top of the

tender handling the spout for the purpose of filling the cistern while he was on the deck, and he had no intimation of the approach of motor 0312. Engineman Lee stated that his headlight was burning but he did not know whether there was a light on the rear of his tender or whether the red and white lanterns in the engine cab were lighted. He said that when he started for the water column it was not dark enough for lights.

Fireman Helmrich, of engine 458, stated that he was standing on, and facing toward, the rear of the tender but looking down into the cistern while taking water when he observed the headlight of motor 0312 flash into view 12 to 14 feet distant; he did not hear the whistle sounded or the bell ringing. Fireman Helmrich stated there was no light on the rear of his tender because in his opinion it was light enough at that time to do without one; however, he had already lighted the lanterns in the engine cab and said that he understood that the rules required night signals be displayed after sunset.

Discussion

The evidence is to the effect that motor 0312 was being operated through the siding at a speed variously estimated to have been between 6 and 15 miles per hour. Apparently the speed was in excess of that which would enable the engineman to stop short of an obstruction, although as a car or cars might be standing on the siding not protected by the display of lights it was incumbent upon the engineman to operate motor 0312 accordingly. The fireman of the motor was not in his proper

position approaching the water column, and since his view would have been across the inside of the curve, it is possible that he would have seen engine 458 in time to have warned his engineman and thus prevented the accident. Engine 458 was a detached road engine on a siding, and since the sun had set, and compliance with rules 17 and 18a was required, it should have displayed either a red light or a white light on the rear of the tender.

The engineman of the motor said that if a light had been displayed on the rear of engine 458, he would have seen it in time to have prevented the collision.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of the crew of motor 0312 properly to control the speed while moving through a siding. A contributory cause was the failure of the crew of engine 458 to display night signals as required by rule.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,
Director.