

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2972

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC  
RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR NEW LISBON, WIS., ON

FEBRUARY 5, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad: Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific

Date: February 5, 1946

Location: New Lisbon, Wis.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: 272 : 256

Engine numbers: 1285 : 820

Consist: 42 cars, caboose : 6 cars

Estimated speed: Standing : 20 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders, and manual-block system for following movements only

Track: Single; 2°30' curve; level

Weather: Misting

Time: 12:30 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 6 injured

Cause: Failure of the railroad to provide adequate safeguards for the movement of trains involved

Recommendation: That the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2972

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

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC  
RAILROAD COMPANY

March 7, 1946.

Accident near New Lisbon, Wis., on February 5, 1946, caused  
by failure of the railroad to provide adequate safe-  
guards for the movement of the trains involved.

1  
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 5, 1946, there was a rear-end collision be-  
tween a freight train and a passenger train on the Chicago,  
Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad near New Lisbon,  
Wis., which resulted in the death of one train-service em-  
ployee, and the injury of two passengers, two railway mail  
clerks and two train-service employees.

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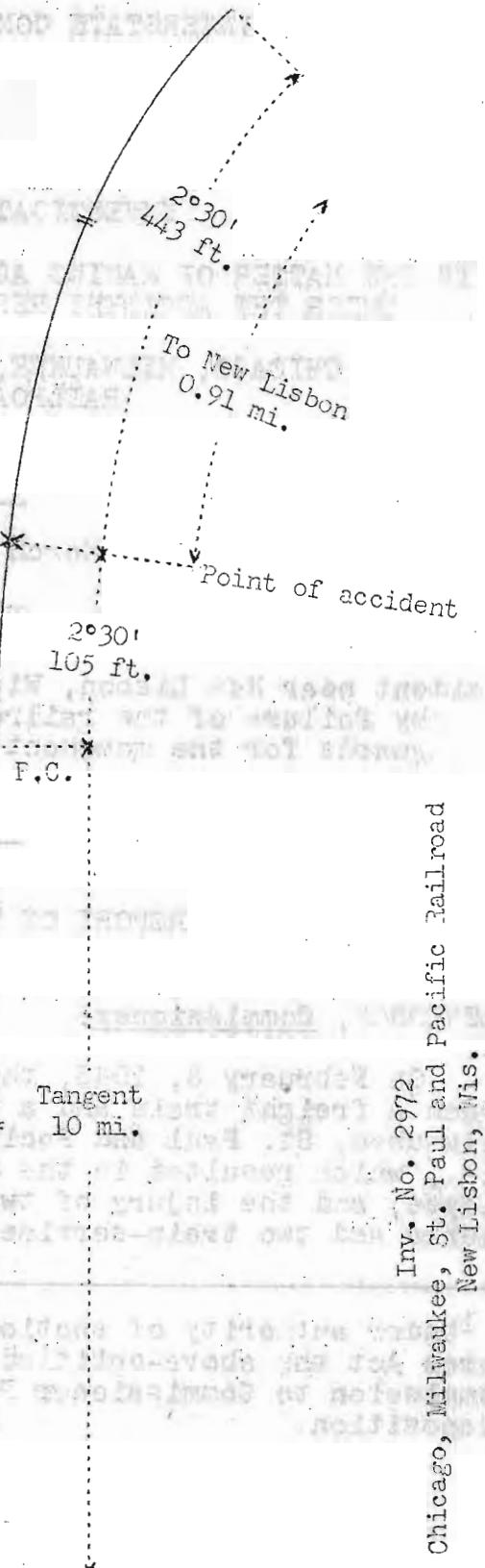
<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and  
disposition.

To New Lisbon →

- New Lisbon, Wis.  
0.91 mi.
- X Point of accident  
10.39 mi.
- South Necedah  
38.00 mi.
- Wisconsin Rapids  
42.30 mi.
- Wausau, Wis.

← To Wausau

Direction of trains →



Inv. No. 2972  
Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad  
New Lisbon, Wis.  
February 5, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the La Crosse & River Division extending between Wausau and New Lisbon, Wis., 91.6 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following movements only. The accident occurred on the main track 90.69 miles east of Wausau, at a point 0.91 mile west of the station at New Lisbon. From the west there is a tangent about 10 miles in length, which is followed by a  $2^{\circ}30'$  curve to the right 105 feet to the point of accident and 443 feet eastward. The grade for east-bound trains varies between 0.10 percent and 0.50 percent descending 1.19 miles, then it is level 206 feet to the point of accident and 694 feet eastward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS.

\* \* \*

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

11. A train finding a fusee burning red on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee, and may then proceed prepared to stop short of train or obstruction within the first mile.

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

\* \* \*

The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds: "—" for longer sounds. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Sound.

Indication.

\* \* \*

(c) — o o o

Flagman protect rear of train.

(d) — — — —

Flagman may return from west or south, as prescribed by Rule 99.

\* \* \*

15. The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to proceed at restricted speed for one mile. The explosion of one torpedo will indicate the same as two but the use of two is required.

\* \* \*

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

\* \* \*

Night signals-A red light,  
Torpedoes and Fusees.

S-71. A train is superior to another train by right, class or direction.

\* \* \*

S-72. Trains of the first class are superior to those of the second; \* \* \*

\* \* \*

86. Unless otherwise provided, an inferior train must be clear at the time a superior train in the same direction is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown.

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees. When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

When the conditions require, he will leave the torpedoes and a lighted fusee.

\* \* \*

Special instructions governing the blocking of following trains read in part as follows:

\* \* \* operators must display train order signal immediately after the departure of a train and not permit any train to follow until such train has passed the next open train order office, or he is authorized to do so by the train dispatcher.

\* \* \*

\* \* \* the train dispatcher will not authorize an operator to permit a train to follow a train until that train has passed the next open office, unless one or more closed stations intervene, in which case the following train may be released after at least 10 minutes have expired after the departure of the train with a train order in the following form:

"No. \_\_\_\_\_ left \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ M and has not passed \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_. (train) may proceed prepared to stop short of train ahead."

\* \* \*

At the time of the accident the manual block involved extended between Wisconsin Rapids and New Lisbon, 49.3 miles.

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 55 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 272, an east-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 1285, 42 cars and a caboose, departed from Wisconsin Rapids, the last open office, at 9:43 p. m., 2 hours 13 minutes late, and stopped about 11:20 p. m. on the main track, with the rear end standing 0.91 mile west of the station at New Lisbon. About 1 hour 10 minutes later the rear end was struck by No. 256.

No. 256, an east-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 820, two express cars, one coach, one mail-express car, one sleeping car and one cafe-parlor-solarium car, in the order named. The second car was of steel-underframe construction, and the remainder were of all-steel construction. At Wisconsin Rapids the crew received copies of train order No. 33 reading as follows:

No 272 left Wisconsin Rapids at 943 PM  
has not arrived at New Lisbon No 256  
may proceed prepared to stop short of  
train ahead.

No. 256 departed from Wisconsin Rapids at 10:46 p. m., 6 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it struck No. 272.

The caboose and the rear three cars of No. 272 and the engine of No. 256 were derailed. The engine of No. 256 stopped practically upright and in line with the track, with the front end 151 feet east of the point of collision. The caboose and the second car ahead of the caboose of No. 272 were demolished.

The remainder of the derailed equipment was considerably damaged.

It was misting at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:30 a. m.

The conductor of No. 272 was killed. The engineer and the fireman of No. 256 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 7.4 trains.

#### Discussion

No. 272, an east-bound second-class freight train, stopped about 11:20 p. m., with the rear end standing 0.91 mile west of the station at New Lisbon. About 1 hour 10 minutes later, while this train was waiting for authority from the yardmaster to enter a yard track on which it could clear for No. 256, an east-bound first-class passenger train, the rear end was struck by No. 256. The latter train was due to leave South Necedah, 11.3 miles west of New Lisbon and the last station westward where time is shown, at 12:15 a. m. Under the rules, No. 272 was required to be into clear at New Lisbon not later than 12:15 a. m., but if it could not clear by that time the crew was required to furnish protection against No. 256.

When No. 272 stopped, the engineer sounded the engine whistle signal for the flagman to provide protection. The flagman proceeded westward a distance of about 500 feet to furnish flag protection. The marker lamps on the caboose were lighted and displayed red to the rear. About 12:28 a. m. the engineer received authority for the train to enter a yard track, and he sounded the engine whistle signal for the flagman to return. Then the flagman placed a lighted 10-minute fusee on the track, and proceeded eastward. He had reached a point about 100 feet east of the caboose and was giving signals with a lighted white lantern for his train to proceed when he saw the reflection of the headlight of an approaching train about 1,500 feet westward. Then he ran westward and was giving stop signals with a lighted red lantern from a point about 100 feet west of his caboose when the engine of No. 256 passed him. The collision occurred 15 minutes after No. 272 was required to be into clear at New Lisbon for No. 256. After the accident, a partly burned fusee was found 243 feet west of the point where the accident occurred. Examination of the fusee indicated that it had burned about 1 minute 20 seconds. The flagman of No. 272 identified this fusee as the one he lighted prior to the collision, and he said that it was burning when the engine of No. 256 passed it. The conductor of No. 272 was in the caboose when the collision occurred, and he was killed.

As No. 256 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The headlight

was lighted brightly and the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. The brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. When the engine was about 3,000 feet west of the point of accident the engineer made a 12-pound brake-pipe reduction, which was not released. No warning signal was seen or heard until the engine was about 600 feet west of the point where the collision occurred. Then the enginemen saw, simultaneously, a lighted fusee and the lighted red marker lamps of the preceding train. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of No. 256 was about 20 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The block system in effect in this territory is inadequate. Under the special instructions governing the blocking of following trains a passenger train may be permitted to enter a block that is occupied by a preceding train when authorized by train order. The train order authorizing No. 256, a passenger train, to enter the block involved, which extended between Wisconsin Rapids and New Lisbon, 49.3 miles, required this train to proceed within the block prepared to stop short of a train ahead at any point between these stations. This order was not addressed to the crew of the preceding train. The train order contained also the information that the preceding train had departed from Wisconsin Rapids, 48.39 miles west of the point where the accident occurred, at 9:43 p. m. No. 256 departed from Wisconsin Rapids at 10:46 p. m. Under an adequate manual block system a passenger train would not be permitted to enter an occupied block, and had such a system been in effect this accident could have been prevented.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure of the railroad to provide adequate safeguards for the movement of the trains involved.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of March, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.