

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT No. 3612  
ILLINOIS TERMINAL RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT REUTERS, ILL., ON  
FEBRUARY 3, 1955

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SUMMARY

Date: February 3, 1955

Railroad: Illinois Terminal

Location: Reuters, Ill.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Extra 230 South : Extra 4951 North

Engine numbers: C.B. & Q. Diesel- : C.B. & Q. steam  
electric unit locomotive 4951  
230

Consists: 50 cars, caboose : 50 cars, caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 8 m. p. h.

Operation: Train orders; yard limits

Track: Single; 2°30' curve; level

Weather: Clear

Time: 9:15 p. m.

Casualties: 1 injured

Cause: Improper handling of train order and  
failure properly to control speed of  
train moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3612

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

ILLINOIS TERMINAL RAILROAD COMPANY

MARCH 24, 1955.

135 C  
278 H

Accident at Reuters, Ill., on February 3, 1955, caused by improper handling of a train order and failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits.

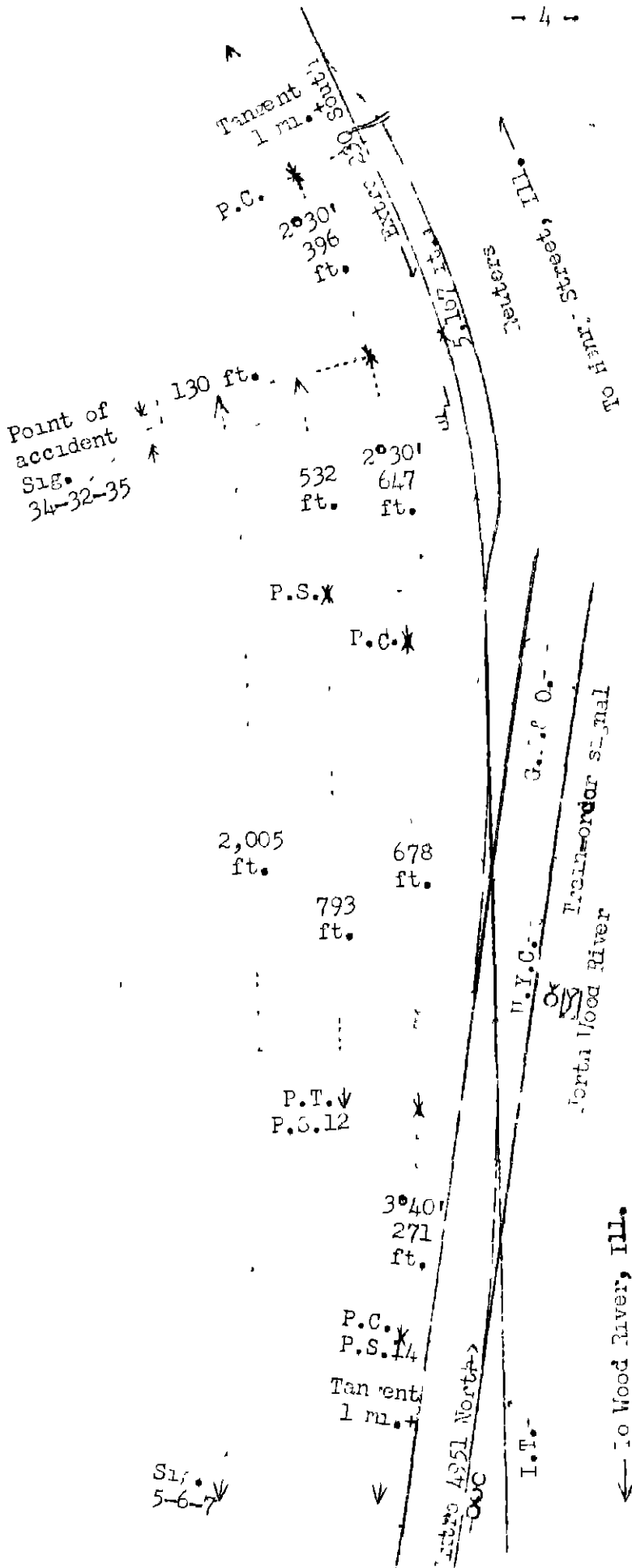
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On February 3, 1955, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Illinois Terminal Railroad at Reuters, Ill., which resulted in the injury of one train-service employee.

1

Under authority of section 17 (c) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and disposition.



- West Alton, Mo.      ↗
- 2.8 mi. Alton, M.I.B. & B.      ↗
- Henry Street, Ill.      ✕
- 1.3 mi.
- Federal
- 2.4 mi.
- ✕ Reuters
- (Point of accident) I.T.
- 1.0 mi.
- North Wood River
- 0.2 mi.
- Wood River, Ill.      ↘

Report No. 3612  
 Illinois Terminal Railroad  
 Reuters, Ill.  
 February 3, 1955

↓ To Wood River, Ill.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Henry Street and Wood River, Ill., 4.9 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by train orders. There is no block system in use, and there are no timetable schedules in effect. At Reuters, 3.7 miles south of Henry Street, a siding 5,167 feet in length parallels the main track on the east. At North Wood River, 4.7 miles south of Henry Street, the main track crosses a main track of the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad and a main track of the New York Central Railroad which parallels the G.M. & O. track on the south. These two tracks are operated jointly by the two carriers as double track. East-bound trains of both lines are operated over the N.Y.C. track, and west-bound trains are operated over the G.M. & O. track. Freight trains of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad regularly are operated over the line of the Missouri and Illinois Bridge and Belt Railroad between West Alton, Mo., 2.8 miles north of Henry Street, and Henry Street; over the line of the Illinois Terminal Railroad between Henry Street and North Wood River; and over the joint line of the N.Y.C. and G.M. & O. west of North Wood River. Train movements between West Alton and Wood River are under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Terminal train dispatcher. Trains moving from the N.Y.C. track to the Illinois Terminal track at North Wood River operate over a connecting track which extends between switch 14, located approximately 135 feet west of the crossing, and switch 12, approximately 135 feet north of the crossing. A similar connecting track is provided for movements from the Illinois Terminal track to the G.M. & O. track. The switches of these connecting tracks and the switch at the south end of the siding at Reuters, located 793 feet north of switch 12, are within the limits of North Wood River interlocking. The accident occurred on the main track within yard limits at a point 532 feet north of the south siding-switch at Reuters. From the north there is a tangent over 1 mile in length and a 2°30' curve to the right 396 feet to the point of accident and 647 feet northward. From the west and south via the N.Y.C. track and switches 14 and 12 there are, in succession, a tangent over 1 mile in length, a 3°40' curve to the left 271 feet, a tangent 678 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is practically level.

Interlocking signal 34-32-35, governing south-bound movements on the Illinois Terminal main track and to the joint tracks of the N.Y.C. and G.M. & O., is located 130 feet south of the point of accident. This signal is of the upper-quadrant semaphore type. Interlocking signal

5-6-7, governing east-bound movements on the N.Y.C. track and to the Illinois Terminal tracks, is located 2,005 feet west and south of the point of accident. This signal is of the color-light type. The aspects applicable to this investigation and the corresponding indications are as follows.

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Night Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>
34-32-35	Red-over-red-over-red	STOP
5-6-7	Red-over-green-over-red	Proceed; medium speed within interlocking limits.

The interlocking station at North Wood River is located in the southeast angle of the crossing. A train-order signal is located west of the interlocking station between the interlocking station and the tracks.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

87. \* \* \*

Extra trains \* \* \* will be governed by train orders with respect to opposing extra trains.

93. \* \* \*

Second and third class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. In case of accident the responsibility rests with the approaching train \* \* \*

205. Each train order must be written in full in a book provided for the purpose at the office of the train dispatcher and with it recorded the names of those who have signed for the order; the time and the signals which show when and from what offices the order was repeated and the response transmitted, and the train dispatcher's initials. These records must be made at once, and never from memory or memoranda.

206. \* \* \*

When train orders are transmitted by telegraph, the train dispatcher must underscore each word and figure in the body of the order at the time it is repeated. When transmitted by telephone, he must write the order as he transmits it and underscore as prescribed above.

\* \* \*

211. When a "19" train order has been transmitted, operators must, unless otherwise directed, repeat it at once from the manifold copy \* \* \* When the order has been repeated correctly, the response "complete", and the time, with his initials, will be given by the train dispatcher. The operator receiving this response will then write on each copy the abbreviation "Co" for the word "complete," the time, and his last name in full and personally deliver a copy to each person addressed without taking his signature. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

214. When a train order has been repeated \* \* \* and before "complete" has been given, the order must be treated as a holding order for the train addressed, but must not be otherwise acted on until "complete" has been given.

There is no prescribed maximum authorized speed for trains in the vicinity of the point of accident.

#### Description of Accident

Extra 230 South, a south-bound C.E. & Q. freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 230, 50 cars, and a caboose. At West Alton the crew received copies of train order No. 32, Form 19, reading in part as follows:

\* \* \*

Motor 230 ran extra West Alton to Wood River

\* \* \*

The order was made "complete" at 7:30 p. m. This train departed from West Alton at 8:05 p. m., entered the line of the Illinois Terminal Railroad at Henry Street at 8 44 p. m., and passed Federal, 1.5 miles south of Henry Street and the

last open office, at 8:50 p. m. It stopped about 9 p. m. with the front of the locomotive 130 feet north of signal 34-32-35, which indicated Stop. About 15 minutes later the front of the locomotive was struck by Extra 4951 North.

Extra 4951 North, a north-bound C.B. & Q. freight train en route from the joint line of the N.Y.C. and G.M. & O. to West Alton, consisted of steam locomotive 4951, 50 cars, and a caboose. This train passed signal 5-6-7 at North Wood River, which indicated Proceed-medium-speed-within-interlocking-limits, and was routed to the main track of the Illinois Terminal via switches 14 and 12. As the train passed the interlocking station the members of the crew on the locomotive received a copy of train order No. 35, Form 19, reading in part as follows.

Eng 4951 run extra Wood River to West Alton  
\* \* \*

The record in the dispatcher's train-order book indicates that this train order had not been made "complete," but the copy delivered to the crew indicates that the order had been made "complete" at 9:05 p. m. The front end of the train passed the interlocking station at 9.15 p. m., and while moving at a speed of about 8 miles per hour it struck Extra 230 South.

The locomotive of Extra 230 South was moved northward about 25 feet by the force of the impact. Both locomotives were somewhat damaged.

The engineer of Extra 230 South was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9.15 p. m.

#### Discussion

The rules of this carrier provide that after a train order has been transmitted and repeated to the train dispatcher and before "complete" has been given the order must be treated as a holding order for the train addressed. It must not be otherwise acted upon until "complete" has been given. The rules also provide that extra trains moving within yard limits will be operated in such manner that they can be stopped short of another train or an obstruction.



Train order No. 32 authorized the movement of Extra 230 South from West Alton to Wood River. According to the record in the dispatcher's train-order book, train order No. 35, which was addressed to the crew of Extra 4951 North, was transmitted to the operator at North Wood River but was not made "complete." According to the copies of the order written by the operator the order was made "complete" at 9 05 p. m. and the movement of Extra 4951 North from Wood River to West Alton was thus authorized. The operator handed a copy of the order, together with a clearance, to the fireman of Extra 4951 North, and the train passed the train-order signal without stopping. After the train was authorized to proceed it was required to be operated within yard limits in such manner that it could be stopped short of another train.

When Extra 230 South stopped at signal 34-32-35 the enginemen and the front brakeman were on the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was dimmed immediately after the train stopped. The engineer saw the headlight of Extra 4951 North as that train approached, and when he observed that the train was moving from the N.Y.C. track to the Illinois Terminal track he assumed that it would be routed into the siding at Routers. After the locomotive passed the south siding-switch there was insufficient time for him to take any action to prevent the collision. Neither the fireman nor the front brakeman saw the opposing train until immediately before the accident occurred.

As Extra 4951 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen and the front brakeman were on the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. The employees on the locomotive estimated that it passed the interlocking station at North Wood River at a speed of 8 or 10 miles per hour. After the locomotive passed the interlocking station the fireman unfolded two train orders and a clearance which he had received from the operator and handed them to the engineer. He did not see Extra 230 South until immediately before the collision occurred. During a period of about 5 weeks before the accident occurred the front brakeman had been assigned to trains which operate over the line of the Illinois Terminal. He was maintaining a lookout ahead from the left side of the cab, and said that he saw the lights on the front end of the locomotive of Extra 230 South when his locomotive was in the vicinity of the south end of the curve on which the accident occurred. When he identified the

lights as the classification lights of a locomotive he called a warning, and the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The front brakeman thought that at this time his locomotive was between 400 and 600 feet south of the locomotive of Extra 230 South. The engineer said that because of curvature of the track he was unable to see Extra 230 South until after the brakeman called the warning. He thought that his locomotive was about 200 feet south of the point of accident when the brake application was made.

The train dispatcher said that when Extra 4951 North passed Lenox, the last open office west of North Wood River on the joint line of the N.Y.C. and G.W.& C., the operator at North Wood River informed him of that fact. The dispatcher then talked with several operators in order to ascertain the location of Extra 230 South, the destinations of cars in the train of Extra 4951 North, and the location of a train which was following Extra 4951 North. He said that during these conversations he informed the operator at North Wood River that Extra 230 South should soon pass Federal and told him that Extra 4951 North could not leave North Wood River until after Extra 230 South had passed that station. He thought the operator replied to him. In order to avoid the possibility that Extra 4951 North might be delayed at North Wood River while the operator prepared the train orders and clearance, the dispatcher then issued train order No. 35. He said that after the operator repeated the order he informed the operator that he would give "complete" as soon as Extra 230 South had passed. He had no further conversation with the operator until after the locomotive of Extra 4951 North had passed the interlocking station. The copy of the order in the dispatcher's train-order book had not been underscored when it was repeated. The dispatcher said that he wrote the order as he transmitted it and listened as the operator repeated it, but that he failed to underscore each word and figure as it was repeated.

The operator at North Wood River said that after he informed the dispatcher that Extra 4951 North had passed Lenox the dispatcher called the operator at West Alton to ascertain whether the train included cars to be set off short of West Alton. The operator at West Alton did not answer immediately, and the operator at North Wood River left the dispatcher's telephone in order to obtain the information from another source. He said that when he returned to the dispatcher's telephone the dispatcher issued train order No. 35 and that when he had repeated the order the dispatcher responded, "Complete 9:05 p. m." He said that during his conversations with the dispatcher, the dispatcher did not mention Extra 230 South nor issue instructions that Extra 4951 North was to be

held at North Wood River to meet an opposing train. He said that Extra 4951 North was approaching when the dispatcher gave "complete" to the order, and he immediately left the telephone, lined the route through the interlocking, and went outside to deliver copies of the order to the crew. There is no approach circuit on the main track of the Illinois Terminal, and until the locomotive of Extra 4951 North was passing the interlocking station the operator was not aware that Extra 230 South had arrived at signal 34-32-35.

The statements of the train dispatcher and the operator indicate that there was a misunderstanding as to whether train order No. 35 was to be acted upon before Extra 230 South passed North Wood River, but because of the conflicting statements of these employes it could not be determined whether the dispatcher made the order "complete." Apparently either the dispatcher inadvertently gave "complete" to the order or the operator misunderstood the dispatcher and mistakenly indicated on his copies that the order had been made "complete." In either event the copies of the order as written by the operator had the effect of authorizing the movement of Extra 4951 North and created an overlapping of authority between the two trains.

Cause

This accident was caused by improper handling of a train order, and failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of March, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,  
Secretary.