

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3666

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR MONROE, MICH., ON

NOVEMBER 18, 1955

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SUMMARY

Date: November 18, 1955

Railroad: New York Central

Location: Monroe, Mich.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Passenger train : Motor-truck

Train number: 304 :

Locomotive number: 3010 :

Consist: 13 cars :

Estimated speeds: 70 m. p. h. : 5-8 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and automatic block-signal system

Tracks: Double; tangent; level

Highway: Tangent, crosses tracks at angle of $35^{\circ} 10'$; 2.6 percent ascending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 7:12 a. m.

Casualties: 9 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Motor-truck occupying rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of approaching train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3666

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

THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD COMPANY

December 27, 1955

Accident near Monroe, Mich., on November 18, 1955, caused
by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway crossing
immediately in front of an approaching train.

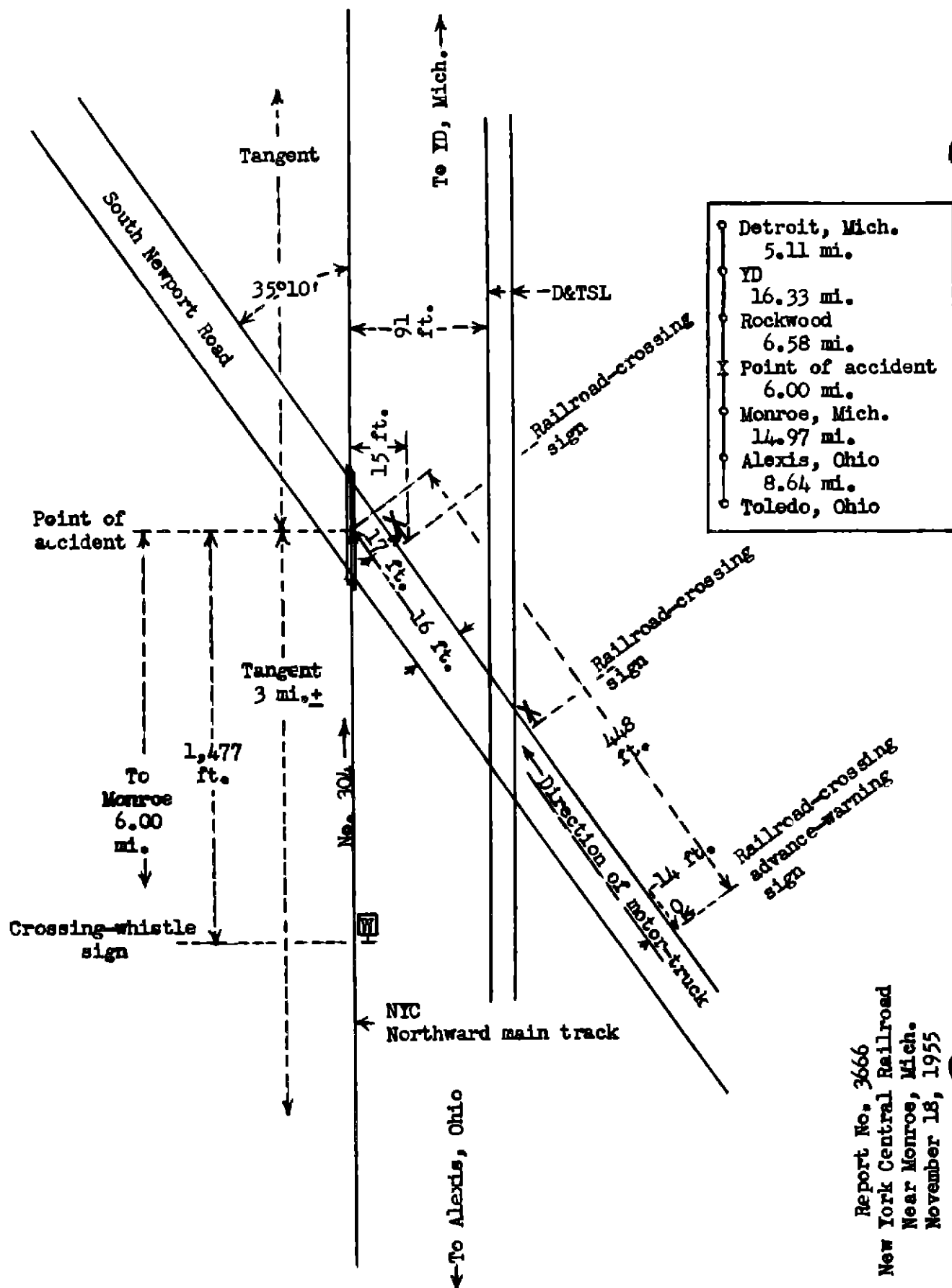
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On November 18, 1955, there was a collision between
a passenger train on the New York Central Railroad and
a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Monroe,
Mich., which resulted in the death of nine occupants of
the motor-truck, and the injury of three occupants of the
motor-truck.

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



Report No. 3666
 New York Central Railroad
 Near Monroe, Mich.
 November 18, 1955

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Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Detroit Division extending between Alexis, near Toledo, Ohio, and YD, near Detroit, Mich., 43.88 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system supplemented by an intermittent inductive automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point 20.97 miles north of Alexis and 6.00 miles north of Monroe, Mich., where the railroad is crossed at grade by South Newport Road. The northward main track is tangent throughout a distance of approximately 3 miles immediately south of the point of accident and a considerable distance northward. The grade is level at the point of accident.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the southward main track is located 1,590 feet west of the northward main track. In this vicinity a double-track line of the Detroit and Toledo Shore Line Railroad parallels the northward main track of the N.Y.C. on the east at a distance of 91 feet.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the railroad extends from southwest to northeast. South Newport Road extends from south to north and intersects the railroad at an angle of $35^{\circ}10'$. Timetable directions on the railroad are north and south, and these directions are used in this report. South Newport Road is 16 feet in width and is surfaced with concrete. It is tangent throughout a considerable distance on each side of the crossing. The grade for west-bound vehicles is, successively, 1.1 percent ascending a distance of 150 feet, practically level approximately 80 feet to the D.&T.S.L. crossing and 60 feet westward, and 2.6 percent ascending 110 feet to the northward main track of the N.Y.C. The N.Y.C. crossing is surfaced with plank and is 36 feet in width.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign is located 14 feet north of the center-line of the highway and 448 feet east of the N.Y.C. northward main track. This sign is 2 feet in diameter and is mounted on a mast 4 feet above the level of the highway. It bears two intersecting diagonal lines and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. The lines and letters are outlined with reflector buttons. A standard crossbuck railroad-crossing sign is located in the northeast angle of the intersection

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of the highway and the D.&T.S.L. tracks. A second cross-buck sign is located 17 feet north of the center-line of the highway and 15 feet east of the center-line of the N.Y.C. northward main track. This sign is mounted on a mast 8 feet 5 inches above the level of the highway and bears the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black on a yellow background. The letters are outlined with reflector buttons. A crossing-whistle sign for north-bound trains is located 1,477 feet south of the crossing.

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

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "—" for longer sounds. * * *

Sound.	Indication.
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* * *

(1) — — o —

(1) Approaching public crossings at grade.
* * *

* * *

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and night. * * *

30. The engine bell must be rung * * * while approaching and passing public crossings at grade * * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 70 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 304, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of steam locomotive 3010, two baggage cars, two refrigerator express cars, four baggage cars, one coach, two sleeping cars, one coach, and one sleeping car, in the order named. The third and fourth cars were of steel under frame construction, the ninth to the thirteenth cars, inclusive, were of lightweight construction, and the other cars were of conventional all-steel construction. This train departed from Monroe, the last open office, at 7:05 a. m., 17 minutes late, and while moving at a speed of 70 miles per hour it struck a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing 6.00 miles north of Monroe, where the railroad is crossed at grade by South Newport Road.

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The vehicle involved was a 1953 model 6-cylinder 1-1/2-ton Chevrolet truck with a van-type body. It was owned by the New York Central Railroad Company and bore Michigan license No. 96-320A. The driver held Michigan operator's license No. K-538 169. At the time of the accident the truck was occupied by the driver and 11 other persons. This vehicle was moving westward on South Newport Road at an estimated speed of 5 or 8 miles per hour when it entered upon the crossing and was struck by No. 304.

No. 304 stopped with the front end 2,600 feet north of the crossing. The front of the locomotive was slightly damaged. The motor-truck was demolished.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:12 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement was 15.5 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 2:01 p. m., November 29, 1955, 367 automobiles and 52 motor-trucks passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 304 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 70 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device. The headlight was lighted brightly. The engineers were in the cab of the locomotive, and the members of the train crew were in the cars of the train. The engineers said that the engineer sounded the grade-crossing whistle signal for a rail-highway grade crossing located 722 feet south of South Newport Road and that he prolonged the signal until the locomotive reached South Newport Road. They said that the locomotive bell was ringing during this time. The engineer said that the locomotive was closely approaching the crossing before he became aware that the truck was entering the crossing in front of the train. He then made an emergency application of the brakes.

When the accident occurred the motor-truck was occupied by 12 members of a maintenance-of-way force of the New York Central Railroad which was temporarily stationed at Rockwood, 12.58 miles north of Monroe. These employees all lived in the vicinity of Monroe. Several of them had no means of transportation between their homes and their temporary headquarters, and the motor-truck was provided by the carrier for their use in going to and from work. It was driven by one of the members of the force. On the day of the accident these employees departed from Monroe about 6.45 a. m.,

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and were to report for duty at Rockwood at 7:30 a. m. When the accident occurred the driver and two employees were seated in the cab, and the other occupants of the truck were in the rear. The occupants of the cab were the only survivors. None of these employees was aware that the train was approaching before the accident occurred, and none of them could remember any details of the trip as the truck was approaching and entering the crossing. The driver had been driving the truck to and from Rockwood during a period of about 1 week preceding the day of the accident. On the day of the accident he planned to stop and place a speed-restriction sign before reaching Rockwood, and for this reason he was using a different route from the one he had previously used.

A witness to the accident had stopped his truck at a rail-highway grade crossing 722 feet south of the point of accident to wait for No. 304 to pass. He said that the grade-crossing whistle signal was being sounded as No. 304 approached and passed that crossing. He first observed the truck moving westward on South Newport Road as it was entering the crossing, and he thought that at this time the truck was moving at a speed of 5 or 6 miles per hour. The accident occurred a short time after daybreak. This witness said that when the accident occurred there was sufficient light so that the use of the headlights on his truck was not necessary.

In the vicinity of the point of accident two pole lines parallel the railroad on the east at distances of 41 feet and 64 feet, respectively. As a vehicle approaches the crossing from the east there is no obstruction, with the exception of these pole lines, to the driver's view of an approaching north-bound train.

Cause

This accident was caused by a motor-truck occupying a rail-highway grade crossing immediately in front of an approaching train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of December, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. MCCOY,

Secretary.