

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2645  
THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR DAVID, CALIF., ON  
NOVEMBER 1, 1942

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Western Pacific  
Date: November 1, 1942  
Location: David, Calif.  
Kind of accident: Head-end collision  
Trains involved: Freight : Freight  
Train numbers: Extra 49 West : Extra 22 East  
Engine numbers: 49 : 22-5  
Consist: 73 cars, cabooses : 74 cars, cabooses  
Speed: 15 m. p. h. : 8 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; tangent; 1 percent  
ascending grade eastward  
Weather: Clear  
Time: 7:50 p. m.  
Casualties: 6 injured  
Cause: Accident caused by annulment of  
a meet order to one of two  
opposing extra trains  
Recommendation: That the Western Pacific Railroad  
Company establish an adequate  
block-signal system on the line  
involved in this accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2645

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

THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

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December 21, 1942.

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Accident near David, Calif., on November 1, 1942, caused  
by annulment of a meet order to one of two opposing  
extra trains.

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

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On November 1, 1942, there was a head-end collision  
between two freight trains on the Western Pacific Railroad  
near David, Calif., which resulted in the injury of six  
employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction  
with a representative of the Railroad Commission of California.

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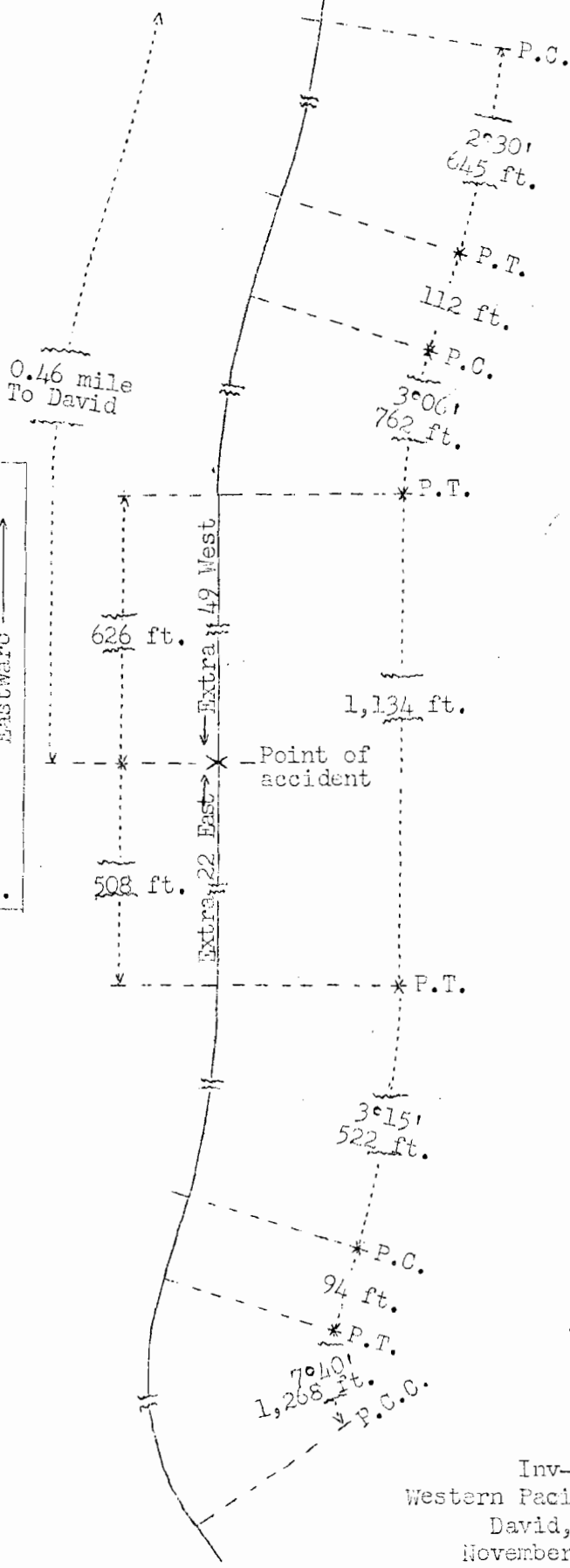
<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-  
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the  
Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and  
disposition.

To Portola ↑

○	Portola, Calif.	82.10 mi.
○	Pulga	4.70 mi.
○	Poe	3.40 mi.
○	David	0.46 mi.
X	Point of accident	6.64 mi.
○	Berry Creek	19.00 mi.
○	Oroville	2.20 mi.
○	Oroville Yard, Calif.	

Time-table direction  
↑ Eastward

↓ To Oroville



Inv-2645  
 Western Pacific Railroad  
 David, Calif.  
 November 1, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Western Division designated as the Third Subdivision and extending between Oroville and Portola, Calif., a distance of 116.3 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred at a point 0.46 mile west of the station at David. Approaching from the east there are, in succession, a 2°30' curve to the right 645 feet in length, a tangent 112 feet, a 3°06' curve to the left 762 feet and a tangent 626 feet to the point of accident and 508 feet beyond. Approaching from the west there are, in succession, a compound curve to the right 1,268 feet in length, the maximum curvature of which is 7°40', a tangent 94 feet, a 3°15' curve to the left 522 feet and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade for west-bound trains varies between 0.79 and 1.00 percent descending throughout a distance of 5,549 feet to the point of accident and is 1.00 percent at the point of accident. The grade for east-bound trains varies between 0.12 and 1.00 percent ascending throughout a distance of 12,414 feet to the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

S-87. \* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

S-88. \* \* \*

At meeting points between extras, \* \* \*, the train in the inferior time-table direction must take the siding, unless otherwise provided.

\* \* \*

220. Train orders once in effect continue so until fulfilled, superseded or annulled. \* \* \*

\* \* \*

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

\* \* \*

S-A.

Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing Trains.

(1) \* \* \*

Extra 24 east meet Extra 25 West at B

\* \* \*

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

L.

Annuling an Order.

(1) Order No 10 is annulled.

If an order which is to be annulled has been delivered to a train, the annulling order must be addressed to that train; if it has not been delivered, the annulling order may be addressed to the operator, \* \* \*

\* \* \*

Time-table instructions read in part as follows:

WESTWARD TRAINS ARE SUPERIOR TO  
EASTWARD TRAINS OF THE SAME CLASS.

In the territory involved the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 25 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 49 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted of engine 49, 67 loaded and 6 empty cars and a caboose. At Portola, 90.2 miles east of David, the crew received a clearance card and copies of five train orders, of which one was train order No. 60, Form 19, reading in part as follows:

\* \* \* ENG 49 RUN EXTRA  
PORTOLA TO CROVILLE YARD  
\* \* \*

After a terminal air-brake test was made this train departed from Portola at 12:35 p. m., according to the dispatcher's

record of movement of trains, departed from Pulga, 8.1 miles east of David and the last open office, at 7:05 p. m., passed Poe, 3.4 miles east of David, and while moving at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour it collided with Extra 22 East at a point 2,452 feet west of the station at David.

Extra 22 East, an east-bound freight train, consisted of engines 22 and 5, coupled, 74 empty cars and a caboose. At Oroville Yard, 28.3 miles west of David, the crew received a clearance card and copies of five train orders, of which one was train order No. 88, Form 19, reading in part as follows:

ENG 22 RUN EXTRA OROVILLE YARD  
TO PORTOLA HOLD MAIN TRACK MEET  
\* \* \* EXTRA 49 WEST AT POE \* \* \*

This order also provided for other meets not involved in this accident. Extra 49 West did not receive a copy of this order. After a terminal air-brake test was made Extra 22 East departed from Oroville Yard at 6 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed Berry Creek, 7.1 miles west of David and the last open office, at 7:12 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour it collided with Extra 49 West.

From an engine moving in either direction in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view of a train approaching from the opposite direction is restricted to a distance of about 800 feet, because of the south wall of a canyon and track curvature.

Engine 49 was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, on its right side on the north side of the track and parallel to it. The first 7 cars of Extra 49 were derailed and stopped in various positions across the track and adjacent to it. Of these cars, four were demolished, one was badly damaged and two were slightly damaged. Both engines of Extra 22 were badly damaged, and the tender of engine 22 was forced against the boiler head. The first car was slightly damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:30 p. m.

The employees injured were the engineer, the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 49 West, and the engineer and the fireman of the first engine and the front brakeman of Extra 22 East.

Data

During the 29-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 21.1 trains.

Train order No. 88 was sent to the operator at Pulga at 5:23 p. m. for delivery to Extra 49 West. Train order No. 88 was annulled by train order No. 91, which was issued to the operator at Pulga at 6:32 p. m.

#### Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that extra trains, with respect to opposing extra trains, will be governed by train orders. Train orders remain in effect until fulfilled, superseded or annulled. All employees involved understood these requirements.

The investigation disclosed that train order No. 60, which authorized the movement of Extra 49 West from Portola to Oroville Yard, was issued by the first-trick dispatcher at 10:25 a. m. Train order No. 88, which authorized the movement of Extra 22 East from Oroville Yard to Portola and established the meeting point for these trains at Poe, was issued by the second-trick dispatcher at 5:23 p. m. and was sent to the operator at Pulga for delivery to Extra 49. However, order No. 88 was not delivered to Extra 49 as train order No. 91, which annulled train order No. 88 to the operator at Pulga, was issued at 6:32 p. m., 33 minutes prior to the departure of Extra 49 West from Pulga, the last open office east of Poe. This was 40 minutes prior to the departure of Extra 22 East from Berry Creek, the last open office west of Poe. The crew of Extra 22 East had no knowledge that order No. 88 had been annulled to the operator at Pulga, and that Extra 49 West would not receive this order. The annulment of order No. 88 resulted in a lap of authority of the trains involved, as the train orders held by the crew of Extra 49 West contained no provision restricting its authority to proceed against Extra 22 East. The crew of Extra 49 West did not know of the existence of Extra 22 East and these trains collided at a point 3.86 miles west of Poe. Extra 22 East was proceeding to Poe to meet Extra 49 West, in compliance with order No. 88, when the collision occurred.

The view had by the members of the crews on the engines of both trains of the point where the accident occurred was restricted to a distance of about 800 feet. Action to stop their respective trains was taken by the engineers, but the distance was not sufficient to stop short of the point of collision.

The second-trick dispatcher stated that annulling train order No. 88 to the operator at Pulga was an oversight on his part, for which there was no explanation except that he was sick. He had been suffering from a cold with fever for the past two days, and had been taking medicine and home remedies. He felt pretty well when he reported for duty, but between



5:00 and 6:00 p. m. he began to feel bad and started taking medicine again, but he thought he could finish his tour of duty and did not ask to be relieved. He said there was no condition in the dispatcher's office that caused him to become confused, and he was not overworked. He indicated that when he changed the meeting point from Poe to Pulga, between Extra 49 and an extra train not involved, he apparently was under the impression that all the meets at Poe had been fulfilled. He annulled order No. 88 to the operator at Pulga at 6:32 p. m., and he did not discover his error until after the accident occurred.

On the line involved trains are operated in the vicinity of the point of accident by timetable and train orders only. Recently the Commission investigated two other accidents which occurred on the line of this carrier in territories on which trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. Of these accidents, the first, which resulted in the death of 3 persons and the injury of 33 persons, was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a light engine near Sunol, Calif., 195 miles west of David, on September 22, 1941. The second, which resulted in the death of 1 person and the injury of 41 persons, was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a light engine near Antelope, Nev., 257 miles east of David, on April 14, 1942. The reports of the Commission covering the investigations of these accidents stated that if an adequate block system had been in use on the lines involved the accidents would not have occurred, and recommended the establishment of an adequate block system on these lines. In the present case, if an adequate block system had been in use, the accident would not have occurred.

#### Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by the annulment of a meet order to one of two opposing extra trains.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Western Pacific Railroad Company establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-first day of December, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.