

No. 52137

Anchorage, Alaska  
January 2, 1951

FROM: GENERAL MANAGER  
ALASKA RAILROAD  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

TO: DIRECTOR  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

ON JANUARY ONE NINETEEN FIFTY ONE EXTRA FIVE SEVEN SIX DASH  
SEVEN FIVE THREE NORTH AND FOUR CARS DERAILED AT MP EIGHTEEN PERIOD SIX FIFTY SIX  
ON SIDE IN DITCH PERIOD FIFTEEN SEVEN INJURED PERIOD TRACK CLEARED TWO AM DATE  
FURTHER DETAILS VIA LETTER.

J. F. JOHNSON

J. F. Johnson, General Manager  
The Alaska Railroad, Anchorage, Alaska

THE ALASKA RAILROAD  
Office of Chief Special Agent  
Report of Investigation

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-2-51, 19\_\_.

To: ~~Clin Colp, Chief Special Agent~~

Subject: ~~Deraiment at Prinsese~~

Statement of Facts:

Evidence of the deraiment of Xtra 560 at mile 18 show that it was caused by the flange ways being iced up at the crossing at mile 15 throwing them off the track allowing them to run free of the track until reaching the switch frogs at mile 18 throwing the lead engine off the track and down the bank on the left side. 2nd engine going behind that point and off the track. Three flats and one reefer also going off the track, but none except 860 overturning.

It is the opinion of the railroad personell contacted, that it was practically impossible for any of the train crew to observe the pony trucks being off the track.

The depth and condition of the ice at the crossing show that the crossing has'ent been cleared in some time.

Time filed 8 45  
8 45 1-3-51

Albert S. Loosemore  
(Signature)

Approved \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Special Agent

(Title) Special Agent, Seward

521.36

Anchorage, Alaska  
January 2, 1951

To: N. A. Sharood, Chief Engineer  
From: Colonel J. P. Johnson, General Manager  
Subject: Derailment of Extra 559 North - January 1, 1951

Cause of derailment of Extra 559 North, January 1, 1951, due to iced-over highway crossing, which delayed traffic and caused considerable expense to The Railroad, indicates the lack of proper patrolling of these crossings ahead of train movements. You will, therefore, issue instructions immediately to have all main highway crossings patrolled ahead of train movements during the winter months, when snow and ice is apt to cause derailments. Particular attention should be given to crossings where heavy highway equipment is being used for the clearing of snow as it packs snow and ice between the rails, leaving a dangerous derailing condition.

Acknowledge receipt of this letter and action taken.

J. P. Johnson  
General Manager

cc: J. E. Manley

JPJ:mae

RECEIVED  
JAN 3 1951  
581  
FIVE  
SUBJECT # 1

January 3, 1951

Mr. James P. Davis  
Director  
Office of Territories  
U. S. Department of the Interior  
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Mr. Davis:

Following up our telegram of January 2, 1951 concerning accident at M.P. 18, January 1, 1951:

Investigation revealed that engine trucks on engine 556 derailed at railroad crossing at M.P. 18.8 account of ice on crossing and carried this position to south switch at Fairrose, splitting switch at this point and turned on side. Engine 559 and 4 cars were also derailed.

Preliminary inspection of equipment and merchandise revealed slight damage to equipment and apparently none to merchandise. Rails and ties were torn up for approximately 7 car lengths.

Carl Botts, fireman on engine 556, was bruised and shaken. There were no other injuries.

The train was traveling 18 miles per hour at the time of accident.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM C. JOHNSON

J. P. Johnson  
General Manager

POST. FILE  
No. 581

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Anchorage, Alaska  
January 3, 1951

Memorandum

To: Mr. J. J. Fleming, General Roadmaster  
From: Mr. H. A. Sharood, Chief Engineer  
Subject: Derailment of Extra 559 North - January 1, 1951

Please note the attached memorandum from the General Manager concerning the accident to Extra 559 North on January 1.

You will please issue instructions accordingly, giving us a copy of them.

Please return Col. Johnson's letter with your reply.

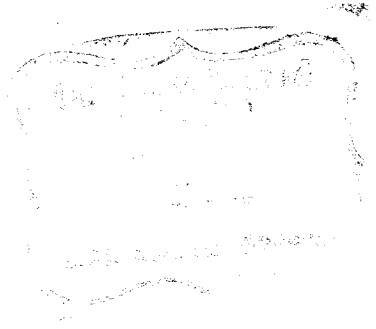
H. A. SHAROOD

H. A. Sharood  
Chief Engineer

Encl. 1

cc: Col. J. F. Johnson  
Mr. John E. Manley

H. Sharood/AM



Anchorage, Alaska  
January 5, 1951

Memorandum

To: Colonel J. P. Johnson, General Manager

From: Mr. R. A. Sharood, Chief Engineer

Subject: Derailment of Extra 559 North - January 1, 1951

This is in response to your letter of January 2 concerning the derailment of Extra 559 North on January 1, and is in addition to our conversation this morning on the same subject.

I have issued instructions to Mr. Fleming, which he has acknowledged, that the first order of business of all section foremen is to patrol their track and see that all crossings are kept clear.

In discussing this matter with Maintenance of Way Supervisors, I am advised that there have been several occasions this winter where section foremen have been unable to get out on the line until after a train had passed and, after following the train to make their track inspection, would find it impossible to get home. The reason for this is the trains operating without the use of flangers have a tendency to pack the snow through the track center and on the outside of each rail. A gas car attempting to run through this trail with new or drifted snow must use his gas car flangers. It has been found at times that even a heavy duty gas car equipped with four-wheel drive is not capable of bucking this condition.

Just recently we have had a considerable amount of difficulty in the territory between Portage and Spencer and have just run the spreader over that track. The Section Foremen at Kashwitna and Julius have on at least two occasions found the telegraph lineman stranded with his motor car and have towed him into headquarters, as he was unable to buck the snow. On two separate occasions the Section Foreman at Chulitna has had to abandon his motor car and walk into camp, as he was unable to drive the speeder.

Circumstances immediately preceding the derailment at Primrose were due to a 6-inch fall of snow and the fact that the last train over the crossing was at approximately 1:30 a.m. Sunday, more than 28 hours before Extra 559 passed, and six inches of snow had fallen in the mean time. For this reason it was impossible for the Section Foremen at Divide or Primrose to patrol the track before Extra 559 could break the trail.

*RS*

I feel that these difficulties will increase as more snow falls on the track and can be remedied only by the almost constant use of the Russell plow, the Jordon spreader, or the reinstallation of locomotive flangers.

*R. A. Sharood*

R. A. Sharood  
Chief Engineer

cc: Mr. John E. Manley  
Mr. J. J. Fleming

Date

*mm*Anchorage, Alaska  
January 8, 1951

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. R. A. Sharood, Chief Engineer  
 FROM: J. J. Fleming, General Roadmaster  
 SUBJECT: AX #1

Date January 1, 1951.  
 Time 8:55 a.m.  
 Location Primrose Siding, south switch.  
 Kind of Accident Derailment of two engines and four cars.  
 Train Involved Freight.  
 Train Number Extra 556 North.  
 Engine Numbers 556/559.  
 Engineers Anderson and Gorman.  
 Conductor Porter.  
 Consist Twelve loads and one empty.  
 Equipment derailed Engine 556/559, car 12353 lumber, car 3008 machinery, car 11501 cold storage, and car 3120 truck.  
 Estimated Speed 18 mph (estimated by Conductor).  
 Cause Pony trucks derailed on road crossing at Mile Post 14.5.  
 Track Damage 759 L.F. 70 lb. rail, 1 #9 70 lb. frog, 1 R.H. 70 lb. switch point, 2 complete sets 70 lb. guard rails, 2 switch rods, 300 lbs. 70 lb. track spikes, 300 lbs. 70 lb. track bolts, 240 cross ties, 400 bridge ties marked 10%, cross ties wheel marked 3½ miles 5 to 10 percent.



Mr. R. A. Sharood  
Page 2  
January 8, 1951

Labor: 135½ foreman hours and 359½ labor hours. It will be necessary to use about 200 hours labor in the spring after the ground thaws in order to take care of work that could not be done at this time. This is Maintenance of Way labor only and does not include wrecking crew and work train.

Operation

Train Order - Time Table.

Track

Straight.

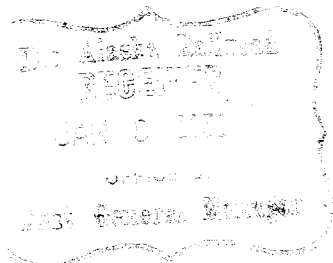
Casualties

Carl Botts, Fireman, extent of injuries not known.

Remarks:

Extra 556, North Portage Turn, derailed pony trucks on Engine 556 while passing through a road crossing located within a 10 degree curve at Mile Post 14.5 between Divide and Primrose. Pony trucks after derailling on road crossing, traveled in derailed position to Mile Post 18.3 at which location they entered the south switch at Primrose Siding. In entering switch of the siding Engine 556 derailed completely, turned over and came to rest on its top at the bottom of the embankment, west side of main line siding; Engine 559 derailed completely but remained in an upright position as did cars 12353, 3008, 11501, and 3120. The actual cause of this derailment was contributed to a ridge of frozen snow left on the crossing by a highway snow plow.

Extra 560 South leaving Portage at 10:45 p.m. Saturday, December 30, 1950 was the last train to pass through this area. This extra arrived in Seward 2:30 a.m. Sunday morning and should have passed Primrose about 1:30. No track inspection was required or made Sunday, December 31, and due to a new snow-fall it was found impossible by the Divide Section Foreman to make an inspection ahead of the extra north the morning of January 1.



(Signed) J. J. FLEMING  
J. J. Fleming  
General Roadmaster

Mr. J. E. Hanley  
Mr. R. E. Bruce

HDOT. FILE

No. 581

Anchorage, Alaska  
January 11, 1951

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Colonel J. P. Johnson, General Manager

FROM: Mr. R. A. Sharood, Chief Engineer

SUBJECT: Derailments - Engine 556

This has further reference to my letter of January 5 concerning the derailment of Extra 556-559/North at Primrose on January 1, and also to AX Report No. 220, dated December 29, 1950.

Accident Report No. 220 states that Engine 556 was derailed at the road crossing on the West Construction Spur account ice on the crossing. Our investigation discloses that this derailment occurred after Extra 559 South had left Portage with a flat car between it and Engine 556. After stopping short of the switch at West Construction Spur, Engine 559 was cut off and moved south to clear the switch while Engine 556 was to shove the loaded flat car into the spur. The flat car passed over the crossing in advance of Engine 556 and did not derail.

This is quite an unusual occurrence as the flat car contained one automobile which was to have been unloaded at the ramp at the end of the spur and was, therefore, not very heavily loaded. It does not seem reasonable to suppose that ice conditions on the crossing would derail the pony trucks of the engine if a light flat car went through the crossing without being derailed.

Roadmaster Hamilton advises me that he had given instructions to the section crews at Tunnel and Portage to clean this crossing, which was done one day before the accident.

Therefore I believe that a contributing cause to this accident, as well as to the accident at Primrose on January 1, was an unbalanced condition on Engine 556, which took too much weight off the pony trucks. I believe this engine should be weighed to determine whether or not there is sufficient weight on the pony trucks.

*R. A. Sharood*

R. A. Sharood  
Chief Engineer

RASharood/dp

cc: Mr. John E. Manley  
Mr. G. A. Benedict  
Mr. R. H. Bruce  
Mr. J. J. Fleming

Anchorage, Alaska  
January 15, 1951

To: J. J. Fleming, General Roadmaster  
From: R. H. Bruce, Acting Supt. of Operations  
Subj: AX report No. 1

Reference is made to report covering accident report on January 1, 1951 at Primrose:

Under remarks you stated that the last train across road crossing at Milepost 11.5 was approximately 1:30 A.M. on December 31, 1950 and that no inspection was required on December 31 as due to new snow fall it was impossible for Divide section foreman to make inspection ahead of Extra North. the morning of January 1, 1951.

As road crossings create quite an accident hazard after heavy snow falls, I do believe that section foreman should whenever possible clean these crossings prior to the passing of trains. If unable to move in gas car, or if crossing is too far to walk, train could be flagged and section hand placed on engine to go to road crossing for inspection.

RHB: gk  
cy-John E. Manley

R. H. Bruce

The Alaska Railroad  
RECEIVED  
JAN 16 1951  
Asst. General Manager



