

Inv-2149

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE

BALTIMORE AND OHIO R. R.

OLD HUTCHINSON SIDING, W. VA.

FEBRUARY 16, 1937

INVESTIGATION NO. 2149

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SUMMARY

Inv-2149

Railroad: Baltimore & Ohio
Date: February 16, 1937
Location: Old Hutchinson Siding, W. Va.
Kind of Accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Cut of cars : Extra 4833
Engine number: : 4833
Consist: 18 cars : Engine and
caboose
Speed: Unknown : 6 or 8 miles per
hour
Track: 1 per cent descending grade
Weather: Cloudy
Time: 4:15 a.m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured
Cause: Failure to set hand brakes on cars
left standing on grade.

April 15, 1937.

To the Commission:

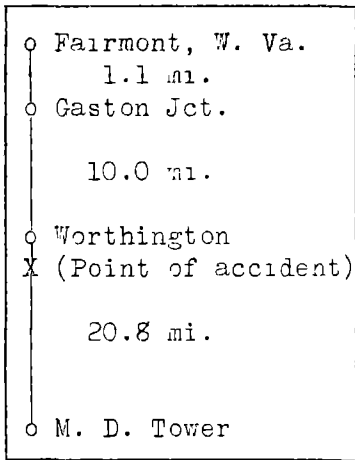
On February 16, 1937, there was a collision between a light engine and a cut of runaway cars on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Old Hutchinson Mine Siding, near Worthington, West Virginia, which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the M.R. Sub-division of the Monongah Division which extends between Fairmont and M D Tower, Clarksburg, West Virginia, a distance of 31.9 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual block-signal system effective only with respect to movements following a train carrying passengers.

In the vicinity of the point of accident, two tracks parallel the main track on the north. The one nearest the main track, called Old Hutchinson Mine Siding, connects with the main track at both ends; this track is 2,155 feet long; the other track, called the Western Maryland main track, connects with Old Hutchinson Mine Track at both ends and is 1,298 feet long; in this report these tracks are referred to as "Old Hutchinson" and "Western Maryland" tracks, respectively. The main track switch at the west end of Old Hutchinson siding is located 2,475 feet west of Worthington, and the west switch connecting the Western Maryland track with Old Hutchinson siding is 107 feet east of the main track switch. The accident occurred at the fouling point between the main track and Old Hutchinson track, 77.5 feet east of the main track switch. Approaching the point of accident from the west there is a 6° curve to the right, 494.2 feet in length, followed by a tangent more than 1/2 mile in length; the accident occurred on this tangent at a point 590 feet from its western end. The grade, on the main track, is 0.09 per cent descending eastward to the point of accident while the grade on the Western Maryland track is 1 per cent descending westward to within a short distance of the point of accident, where it becomes level.

It was dark and the weather was cloudy at the time of accident, which occurred about 4:15 a.m.



Direction of Engine 4833

513 ft.

Main track switch

Point of accident

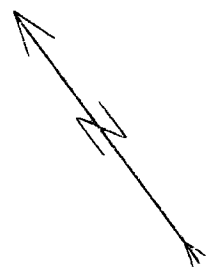
78 ft.

Level 150 ft.

Direction of Runaway cars

Western Maryland Main
Old Hutchinson Siding
Main track

-1.0%



Inv. No. 2149
Baltimore & Ohio R.R.
Old Hutchinson Siding, W.Va.
Feb. 16, 1937

Description

Extra 4833, an eastbound freight train, consisted of engine 4833 and a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Merrifield and Engineman Summers. This train departed from Gaston Junction, W. Va., at 2:10 a.m., according to the train sheet, arrived at the Old Hutchinson track about 2:45 a.m., assembled 18 empty coal cars on the Western Maryland track and awaited the arrival of two opposing trains. After the departure of these trains, engine 4833 backed out on the main track to make a flying switch with the caboose which was coupled behind the tender. While making this switch, engine 4833 collided with the cut of cars while moving at a speed of about 8 or 10 miles per hour, the cars having drifted down the Western Maryland track and fouled the main track switch.

The engine and tender, coupled, overturned to the left and stopped close to and parallel with the main track, with the head end of the engine 134 feet east of the switch. The head car of the cut stopped with its west end on the front end of the engine and its east end across the main track; the west truck of the second car was derailed; none of the other cars in the train was derailed or damaged. The employee killed was the engineman and the employee injured was the fireman of engine 4833.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Merrifield, of Extra 4833, stated that his train arrived at Old Hutchinson track at about 2:45 a.m., and switched out 18 empties, which with the caboose were to comprise their train leaving that point. He gave instructions to cut the air through the entire cut, and by opening the bleed valve on the last car he satisfied himself that his orders had been carried out. The 18 cars were then shoved into the Western Maryland track and the entire train remained there for about 15 minutes awaiting the departure of 2 opposing trains; during this time he instructed his men regarding the remaining moves to be made at that station. After the opposing trains had departed, engine 4833 backed out on the main track, shoving the caboose, and proceeded to make a flying switch to place the caboose against the cut of cars. In making this movement he was watching the engine and caboose and did not notice that the cars had started to move toward the main track; almost immediately after he had thrown the switch between the engine and the caboose the collision occurred. He did not instruct Brakeman Sypolt to set hand brakes on the cars before uncoupling the engine because he thought that air brakes would hold the cars for the short time that they would be detached, but he was not certain that he had given instructions to apply the

air brakes as he was relying on Brakeman Sypolt to take such action as was necessary to hold the train. Conductor Merrifield stated that he was informed by Brakeman Sypolt after the accident that he had set the air brakes by opening the angle cock just before the engine was uncoupled from the cars. Conductor Merrifield stated that the accident occurred about 4:15 a.m., that the headlight of the engine was lighted at the time, and that the speed of the engine just prior to the collision was between 6 and 8 miles per hour. He was familiar with the rules requiring that hand brakes be set on cars left on sidings and he was examined on the book of rules about two years ago.

The statement of Brakeman Sypolt concerning the movements of their train up to the time the 18 cars were shoved in to the Western Maryland track, agreed with that of Conductor Merrifield, although he did not know whether there was air through the entire train at that time; and although there was some doubt in his mind regarding the position of the angle cock between the second and third cars, he did not ascertain its position. Brakeman Sypolt stated that he had been furloughed for almost four years prior to September, 1936, and that he had not done any work on the Old Hutchinson track or the Western Maryland track since that time and was not familiar with the physical characteristics at that point. When the cars were shoved into the Western Maryland track he stationed himself to handle the main line switch and did not know whether Engineman Summers used the automatic brake to make the stop. As the last opposing train was approaching, Brakeman Sypolt closed both angle cocks between the engine and first car, uncoupled the air hose, opened the angle cock on the first car and left it open until the air ceased blowing, lifted both coupler lock blocks and then walked to the main line switch. When the opposing trains had passed, which was 8 or 10 minutes after he had uncoupled the engine, Engineman Summers backed away from the cars to a point sufficiently west of the main track switch to permit making a flying switch of the caboose which was behind the engine. Brakeman Sypolt stated that he was on the rear, right side of the tender while making the flying switch and he estimated the speed at 8 to 10 miles per hour. He was not instructed by Conductor Merrifield to set either hand or air brakes, nor informed by him concerning the grade conditions in the vicinity of the point of accident.

Fireman Kinsey stated that he was positive that the air was cut in on the 18 cars that were shoved on to the Western Maryland track, but did not remember whether the automatic brake was used at any time. Being on the left side of the engine he was unable to see the cars drifting out of the siding and had no intimation of danger until Engineman Summers called a warning just before the collision.

Road Foreman of Engines Headley stated that he arrived at the scene of the accident at 7:35 a.m., and made an inspection of the engine; he found the throttle closed, the reverse lever in forward motion and the automatic and independent brake valves in running position.

About four hours after the accident, Trainmaster Deegan and Car Inspector Lough made an inspection of the brakes on the cars involved in the accident, and found that the eight cars farthest from the engine were equipped with "AB" brakes which were all set; the next eight cars were equipped with "K" brakes and none were found applied, while the two cars next to the engine were damaged so that an inspection of the brakes was impossible. The brake pipe on the 16 undamaged cars was coupled throughout but the angle cock on the west end of the third car from the engine was closed and the brake pipe on the two cars which were derailed was broken. No hand brakes were found applied.

Tests were made in which the cars involved in the accident were placed in the same position they had occupied when engine 4833 was uncoupled to make the flying switch; in each test the air brake equipment was fully charged. In the first test neither hand nor air brakes were applied and when the engine was uncoupled and moved away from the cars they immediately started to follow, and reached the point of collision in one minute and 40 seconds. In the second test an angle cock was closed between the second and third cars from the engine and the brakes were applied, on the two cars next to the engine, by uncoupling the air hose between the engine and the first car and opening the angle cock on the first car. Although, due to damage incurred during the collision the only effective brake on these two cars was on one truck of the second car, the entire cut remained stationary when the engine was moved away; this test was of 10 minutes duration. The third test was made to determine the condition of the brakes on the entire cut of cars, and all but one were found to be in good condition.

Discussion

Rule 100 in the book of rules reads in part as follows:

"When the engine is detached from the train, or cars set off, trainmen will apply sufficient hand brakes to secure same at all times. Air brakes must not be depended upon to hold detached trains on grades. *****"

The investigation developed that hand brakes were not set on the

detached cars before engine 4833 was uncoupled preparatory to making the flying switch. Conductor Merrifield admitted that he did not instruct Brakeman Sypolt to set hand brakes, and was uncertain as to whether he had given Brakeman Sypolt instructions to apply the air brakes. Brakeman Sypolt claims to have exhausted the air from the brake pipe of the cars before uncoupling the engine, and stated that about 10 minutes elapsed between the time he applied the air brakes and the time engine 4833 moved away from the cars. Tests made after the accident indicate that had a brake been set on one car the entire cut of cars would have remained stationary when the engine was uncoupled.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by failure to apply hand brakes on cars left standing on a grade.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.