

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT ON THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY AT WARREN,
VA. ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1935.

October 18, 1935.

To the Commission:

On September 10, 1935, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway at Warren, Va., which resulted in injury to three employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Rivanna Sub-division of the Richmond Division, extending westward from R Cabin, Richmond, to Gladstone, Va., 120.7 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table, train orders and a manual block-signal system. Approaching from the east, tangent track 3,810 feet in length is followed by a 1° curve to the left, 1,700 feet in length; the accident occurred on this curve at a point 804 feet from its eastern end and 352 feet west of the block signal located at Warren station. Grade in the vicinity of the point of accident is practically level.

A passing siding 6,794 feet in length parallels the main track at the north, the east switch being located 3,444 feet east of the station or 3,796 feet east of the point of accident. The block section within which this accident occurred extends between Warren and Warminster, 13.7 miles west of Warren.

The track rests upon a low fill, formerly the tow path of a canal. Buildings and trees at the south side of the right-of-way restrict the distance that the point of accident may be seen from a west-bound locomotive approximately to 740 feet.

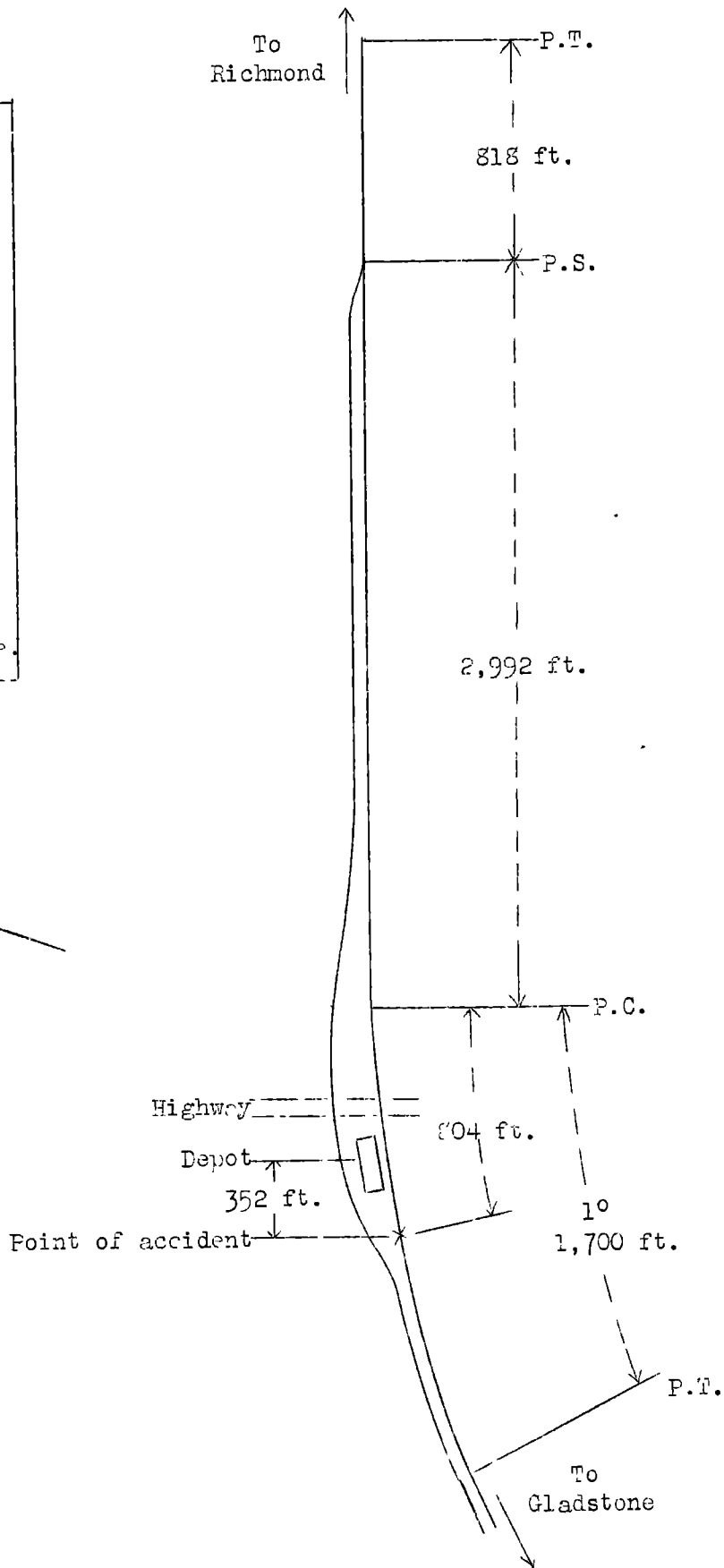
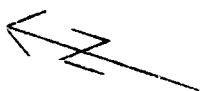
The accident occurred about 1:05 a.m., at which time the weather was dark and clear.

Description

Second No. 78, an east-bound fourth-class freight train in charge of Conductor Parker and Engineman Parrish, departed from Gladstone at 11:05 p.m., September 9, according to the train

To
Richmond

• Richmond (R Cabin)
70.6 mi.
• Strathmore
16.6 mi.
* Warren
13.7 mi.
• Warminster
19.8 mi.
• Gladstone, Va.



Inv. No. 2009
 Chesapeake & Ohio Ry.
 Warren, Va.
 September 10, 1935

sheet, 4 hours 15 minutes late. At Warminster, 19.8 miles east of Gladstone, train order 131 was received, reading:

"Extra 1246 West meet Second 78 at Warren,
First 72 at Warminster. Order No. 102 is annulled."

Train Second No. 78, consisting of 160 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1236, departed from Warminster at 12:10 a.m., arrived at Warren at 12:42 a.m., and later was struck by Extra 1246 West.

Extra 1246, a west-bound freight train in charge of Conductor Fleming and Engineman Taylor, departed from R Cabin, Richmond, at 2:25 p.m., September 9. At Strathmore, 16.6 miles east of Warren, train order 131, quoted previously, was received. Extra 1246, consisting of 150 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1246, departed from Strathmore at 12:20 a.m., passed the east switch of the passing siding at Warren where that train should have entered the siding, continued westward upon the main track a distance of 3,796 feet, and collided with Second No. 78 which was standing west of the block signal. Speed of Extra 1246 at the time of accident is estimated at about 28 to 35 miles per hour.

Both locomotives were derailed and damaged but remained upright on the roadbed. The leading 28 cars of Extra 1246 were scattered across the main track and the passing siding, but no car of Second No. 78 was derailed. The employees injured were the firemen of both locomotives and the front brakeman of Second No. 78.

Summary of evidence

Train Dispatcher Hardenbergh stated that he served on second track on September 9, and issued train order 131, this order being addressed to Second 78 and operator at Warminster, First 72 at Gladstone, operator at Warren, and Extra 1246 and operator at Strathmore.

Operator Moss stated that he delivered a copy of train order 131 to Engineman Taylor of Extra 1246 West at Strathmore, in the presence of the front brakeman of that train, and informed them that Second No. 78 would be first to arrive at Warren, after which Engineman Taylor read the order aloud to the brakeman. Operator Moss delivered a copy of train order 131 to the conductor on the caboose as Extra 1246 departed from Strathmore at 12:20 a.m.

Operator Morris stated that he delivered copies of train order 131 to the engine crew and to the crew on the caboose of Second No. 78 as that train passed Warminster.

Operator Harford stated that he copied train order 131 and afterwards delivered a copy of that order to the front brakeman of Second No. 78 at Warren, after that train had arrived at 12:42 a.m. and stopped at the water column west of the station. He instructed the brakeman that his train should not proceed until Extra 1246 West cleared the main track. Observing the extra approaching the east switch of the passing siding, he commenced to copy a train order but was warned by the brakeman that the extra was approaching at high speed. He left the office, following the brakeman who seized a lantern and gave stop signals to the oncoming train; then both moved away from the track and neither shouted at the passing engine. The weather was clear and the block signal, which was in stop position, could be seen distinctly. Extra 1246 was moving about 25 to 30 miles per hour at the time of collision and apparently had not reduced speed after coming into view. The accident occurred at 1:05 a.m.

Engineman Taylor, of Extra 1246 West, stated that he received train order 131 at Strathmore, directing Extra 1246 to meet Second No. 78 at Warren, which he read to his brakeman and to the operator. After starting his train he gave the order to his fireman who named the meeting point and passed the order to the brakeman. He sounded a road crossing signal at Hatton, 2.7 miles east of Warren, and passed over a lock of the abandoned canal, about one-fourth mile west of Hatton station, after which he fell asleep and did not waken until the collision occurred. He was working a full throttle at Hatton, he did not afterward change positions of throttle or reverse lever, and he did not feel the brakes applied from the rear of his train. He had ample rest before commencing this tour of duty and he was not drowsy when at Strathmore. He could not explain why he fell asleep; he denied that he had ever been characteristically drowsy and he did not recall having fallen asleep previously on a moving engine.

Fireman Bagby, of Extra 1246, stated that he read the train order and repeated to his engineman that they were to meet Second No. 78 at Warren. As the road crossing signal was sounded at Hatton he started back into the tender to attend to his fuel supply. The engineman looked at him and placed his hand upon the throttle, signifying that he intended to shut off steam. The brakeman joined Fireman Bagby in the tender and both attempted unsuccessfully to loosen a slide in order that coal might flow into the conveyor. He did not hear a meeting-point signal but he was confident that the engineman would shut off steam at the proper time. He remained in the tender until the collision occurred, unaware that his train had passed the switch of the passing siding. He estimated speed of his train at time of collision as about 28 to 30 miles per hour and he observed no

reduction of speed as if air brakes were applied from the rear of the train. Fireman Bagby did not observe Engineman Taylor asleep on this trip.

Front Brakeman Angle, of Extra 1246, stated that his engineman read train order 131 to him in the telegraph office at Strathmore; he read the order over the engineman's shoulder at that time and he read it again after it was read by the fireman, understanding that his train was to meet a train at Warren and another at Warminster, taking siding at each place. He heard the road crossing signal sounded at Hatton but he did not hear the meeting-point signal sounded for Warren. Although he had not been so instructed by his conductor, he understood that the Book of Rules authorized him to stop the train upon failure of the engineman to sound the required meeting-point signal. He went back into the tender after passing Hatton to assist the fireman in opening a coal slide, after which he stood in the tender until the collision occurred, a switch key in his hand, looking forward toward the engine and waiting for the engineman to stop the train. Believing Engineman Taylor awake, Brakeman Angle did not look out and thus failed to see indications of the switch, block and train-order signals. Something jerked him from his feet immediately before the collision occurred but he did not say certainly that he felt the air brakes applied from the rear of the train. His train was moving at speed of about 50 miles per hour at Hatton, which speed was not reduced appreciably until the time of accident.

Conductor Fleming of Extra 1246 stated that he received train order 131 which directed him to meet Second No. 78 at Warren and First No. 72 at Warminster, taking siding at each place. His train consisting of 151 cars, he failed to hear the road crossing signal sounded for Hatton or the meeting-point signal sounded for Warren. Operating rule S-90(a) reads, in part:

"The engineman of such trains will give signal 14(n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point. The engineman of the inferior train will give signal 14(n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting point, by rule, with a superior train. Should the engineman fail to give signal 14(n) as herein prescribed, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

Note.--On trains of 25 or more cars, the conductor may delegate the head brakeman to take necessary action."

He acknowledged that he had not so delegated his brakeman. As his train approached Warren, moving about 35 miles per hour,

he remarked to the rear brakeman that it was time to reduce speed. The brakeman agreed that a train was to be met at Warren. Conductor Fleming descended from the cupola of his caboose to read his train order, returned to the cupola, and applied the brakes in emergency when the engine of his train was near the east switch of the passing siding. All brakes of his train were in good order when tested before departure from Richmond. The impact of collision was not violent and at that time he believed that he had stopped the train from the rear end.

Rear Brakeman Bondurant of Extra 1246 stated that he read train order 131 which directed his train to meet Second No. 78 at Warren and First No. 72 at Warminster. As his train approached Warren, moving about 30 miles per hour, the conductor remarked that the train was "going mighty fast" again read his train order, and then applied the air brakes in emergency. He could not say whether his train was stopped by application of the brakes or by the collision.

Engineman Parrish of Second No. 78 stated that he received train order 131 at Warminster. Arriving at Warren, he stopped his engine at the water column west of the station. Some time later, preparing to take water, the fireman had the spout in the tank when the collision occurred. Observing Extra 1246 West approaching closely, he jumped from his engine. Extra 1246 was moving about 30 miles per hour at the time of collision and apparently had not reduced speed after coming in sight. head-lights of both locomotives and the block-signal light at Warren were burning brightly at the time of the accident.

Fireman Norment of Second No. 78 stated that he observed Brakeman Gary giving a stop signal to Extra 1246 when near the road crossing, just east of Warren station; the approaching train was moving about 30 or 35 miles per hour at that time and apparently did not reduce speed before the collision occurred.

Front Brakeman Gary of Second No. 78 stated that he read and understood train order 131 to meet Extra 1246 at Warren, which was received at Warminster and permitted his train to proceed to the block signal at Warren. He heard a road crossing signal sounded at Hatton but heard no meeting-point signal. The operator remarked to him in the telegraph office at Warren that the train was coming on the main track. Brakeman Gary ran outside and commenced giving a stop signal with a lamp, at which time

the approaching train was about 1,000 feet distant and was moving at least 30 miles per hour. The headlight prevented him from seeing flying fire or other indication that brakes were applied and, when the engine reached him, he moved away from the track and did not recall shouting a warning to the engineman of the west-bound train.

Conductor Parker of Second No. 78 stated that train order 131 instructed him to meet Extra 1246 at Warren and did not permit his engine to pass that station until the extra reported clear at the east end of the passing siding and the block signal was clear. He was near the rear end of his train at the time of accident and Rear Brakeman Johnson of Second No. 78 was protecting the rear of his train; they did not witness the collision.

Car Inspectors Robinson and Temple stated that Extra 1246 West consisted of 150 cars and a caboose, that they tested the air brakes of this train at Fulton yard, Richmond, according to rule, and that all brakes were operative at time of departure.

Discussion

Apparently Engineman Taylor of Extra 1246 West was awake and alert at a point not more than 1.6 miles from the switch at which his train should have taken siding to meet a superior train, yet fell asleep and did not waken until the accident occurred. He had been on duty 11 hours 20 minutes at the time of accident. After passing Hatton Fireman Bagby left the engine cab and went into the tender to attend to his fuel supply, where he was joined by Brakeman Angle who sought to render assistance. The fireman and the brakeman remained in the tender until the accident occurred; neither noticed that Engineman Taylor was asleep nor his failure to sound the meeting-point signal and neither looked out to ascertain proximity of the switch at which their train should have entered the siding. Had either the engineman, the fireman or the brakeman been alert to his duty, it is improbable that this accident would have occurred.

Conductor Fleming of Extra 1246 stated that he applied the air brakes from the rear of his train when his engine was in the vicinity of the east switch of Warren passing siding; this statement was corroborated by testimony of Brakeman Bondurant; however, no application of brakes was observed by employees on the locomotive and speed was not reduced appreciably while the engine traveled a distance of 3,796 feet from the switch to the point of accident.

Rule S-90(a) of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway transportation rules requires the conductor to stop the train if the engineman fails to sound the meeting-point signal at least one mile

before reaching a meeting or waiting point; on trains of 25 or more cars he may delegate the head brakeman to take necessary action. Had Conductor Fleming delegated this authority to Brakeman Angle, the brakeman, observing failure to sound the prescribed meeting-point signal, might have awakened the engine-man and thus have averted the accident.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by failure of Extra 1246 West to obey a meet order, due to the engineman falling asleep and failure of fireman and head brakeman properly to check the movement of their train when approaching the meeting point.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.