Inv-2244

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE

CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL & PACIFIC RAILROAD

LANARK, ILL.

JANUARY 12, 1938.

INVESTIGATION NO. 2244

SUMMARY

Inv-2244

Railroad:	Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific	
Date:	January 12, 1938.	
Location:	Lanark, Ill.	
Kind of accident:	Collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 8689 West	: Extra 8655 East
Engine numbers:	8689	: 8655
Consist:	Engine backing up with cut of 35 cars	: Engine shoving caboose and tank car
Speed:	3-4 m.p.h.	: Standing
Track:	Tangent	
Weather:	Sleeting	
Time:	3:45 a.m., dark	
Casualties:	1 killed	
Cause:	Failure to require a trainman to occupy a conspicuous position on the leading car of a cut of cars being shoved on a yard track.	

February 8, 1938.

To the Commission:

On January 12, 1938, there was a collision between two cuts of cars being shoved on a siding of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St.Paul & Pacific Railroad at Lanark, Ill., which resulted in the death of one employee.

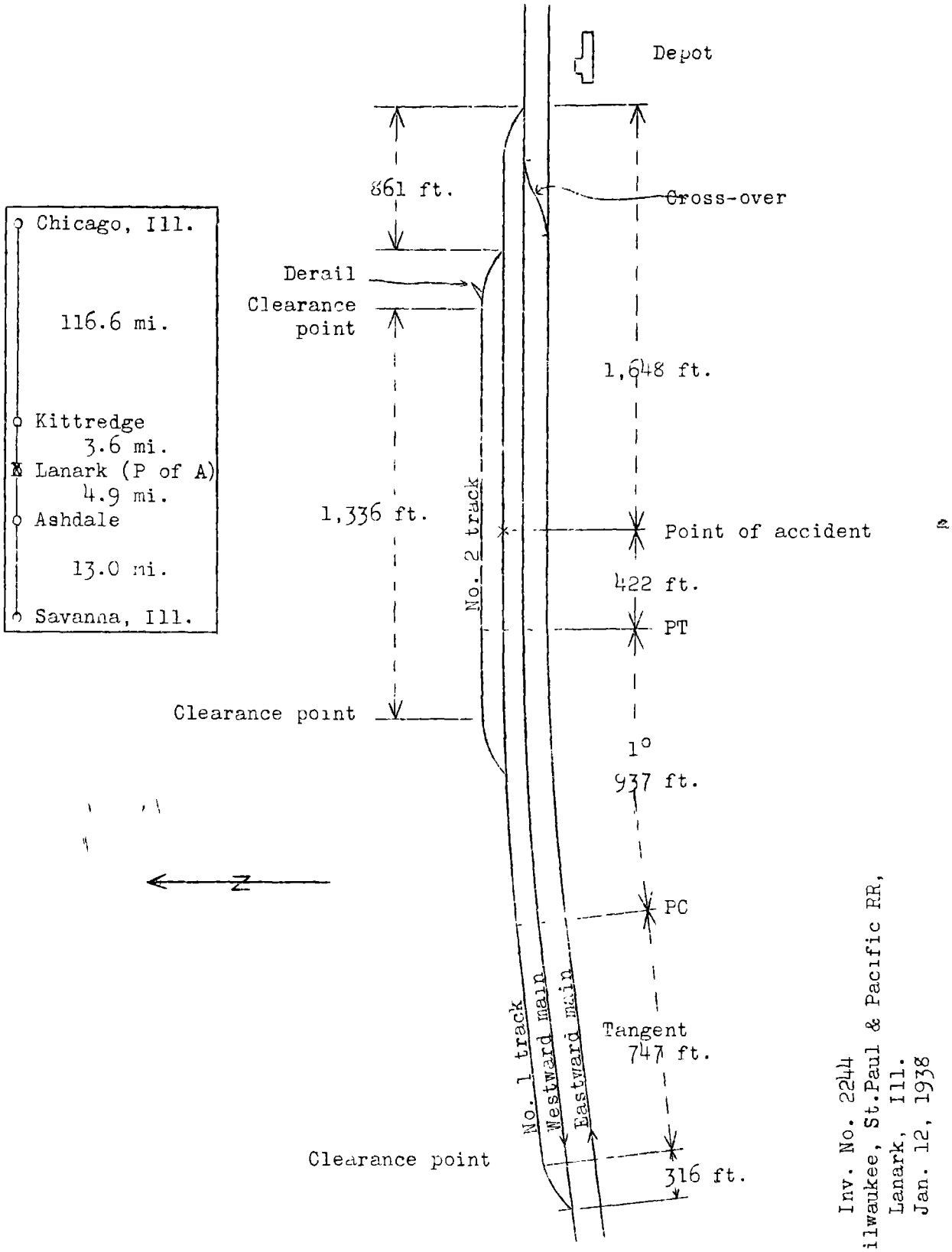
Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the First District of the Dubuque & Illinois Division which extends between Chicago and Savanna, Ill., a distance of 136.1 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system.

At Lanark there are four tracks, designated from south to north as eastward main track, westward main track, No. 1 west siding and No. 2 track. No. 1 track parallels the westward main track and is 4,070 feet long, with its east switch 215 feet west of the center line of Lanark station. No. 2 track parallels No. 1 track extending 1,336 feet between clearance points, and connects with No. 1 track at both ends, its west switch being located 1,479 feet east of the west switch of No. 1 track. From the east the tracks are tangent to a point 2,285 feet west of Lanark station, followed by a 1° curve to the south 957 feet long and a tangent more than a mile long. The accident occurred on No. 1 track about 1,648 feet west of the east siding-switch; in this vicinity the track is level.

A special instruction in the timetable places the westward main track within yard limits from a point 3,700 feet east of the station to the west switch of No. 1 track.

Rule 24 of the operating department provides that when cars are pushed by an engine, except when shifting or making up trains in yards, a white light must be displayed on the front of the leading car by night, and rule 103 provides that in similar circumstances a trainman must take a conspicuous position on the front of the leading car. Rule 904 provides that engines and cars must be moved on yard tracks only as the way is seen or known to be clear. Rule 905 provides that when switching at stations or in yards where engines may be working at both ends of a track movements must be made carefully, and arrangements must be made with other crews to guard against accident.



Inv. No. 2244
Chicago, Milwaukee, St.Paul & Pacific RR,
Lanark, Ill.
Jan. 12, 1938

At the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:45 a.m., the weather was dark and cloudy, with a strong wind blowing light snow and rain from the northwest.

Description

Extra 8655, an east-bound freight train, consisted of a caboose, hauled by engine 8655 backing up, and was in charge of Conductor Harris and Engineman Casselberry. This train left Savanna, at 2:25 a.m., according to the train sheet, and at 3:21 a.m. it arrived at Lanark, 17.9 miles east of Savanna, where it crossed over to the westward main track and then headed in to clear at the east end of No. 1 track to await the arrival of Extra 8689 from the east with cars for Nahant, Iowa, which Extra 8655 was to pick up. After Extra 8689 passed, engine 8655 shoved the caboose westward on No. 1 track a short distance and coupled to an empty tank car. It then started to shove ahead again but had gone only a short distance when it became involved in a collision with a cut of cars being shoved eastward on No. 1 track.

Extra 8689, a west-bound freight train, consisted of 45 cars and a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Wobig and Engineman Woodward. This train passed Lanark depot at 3:34 a.m., according to the train sheet, with instructions to set out 23 loaded cars, located behind the head 12 cars, and also to pick up a car of merchandise that was standing on No. 2 track. The train stopped on the westward main track at the west switch of No. 1 track and a cut was made behind the thirty-fifth car. While these cars were being shoved eastward on No. 1 track at a speed of about 3 or 4 miles per hour the east car in the cut struck the west end of the cut of cars being handled by engine 8655.

As a result of the collision the bottom frame together with the cistern of the empty tank car was lifted from the trucks and was telescoped into the wooden body of caboose 01516 for practically its entire length; the stove in the caboose overturned and the wreckage caught fire. Both trucks of the tank car were jammed against the west drawbar of the caboose. Engine 8655 was not derailed or damaged. Only the lead truck of the east car in the cut of cars being set out by Extra 8689 was derailed. The employee killed was the conductor, who was in caboose 01516.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Casselberry, of Extra 8655, stated that his engine, with a caboose coupled ahead, stood in the clear at the east end of No. 1 track awaiting the arrival of Extra 8689 and about 10 minutes after that train had passed his engine moved slowly ahead a distance of 6 or 8 car lengths where they coupled to the empty tank car, and then continued westward on No. 1 track at a speed of

about 3 or 4 miles per hour. After slowly shoving the empty tank car about three car lengths the brakeman on the front end of the tank car gave him a three-car signal by means of a lighted lantern, and almost immediately afterward gave a stop signal. The engine was shut off at the time and the stop was made promptly; almost immediately the collision occurred. Vision was obstructed to some extent by the wind-blown snow. The headlight on his engine was extinguished, but the classification lights on the front end were burning. He was operating his engine at a low rate of speed in accordance with hand lantern signals given by the brakemen.

Fireman Haberbush, of Extra 8655, stated that he was maintaining a lookout ahead from the left side of the engine cab, but his vision was restricted by weather conditions and smoke and steam blowing down on his side. He saw the markers on the caboose which was standing on the main track to the west of his engine, but did not know how far away the caboose stood, although he estimated the distance at 12 to 15 car lengths. He did not see any member of the crew of Extra 8689 on the leading car of the cut being backed eastward on No. 1 track, nor any lighted lantern on that cut of cars. He estimated that they had moved about two car lengths after coupling to the tank car when the accident occurred and their speed was about 2 or 3 miles per hour.

Flagman Vesely, of Extra 8655, stated that after Extra 8689 arrived at Lanark his conductor informed him that some switching was to be done, and instructed him to couple to the tank car and then to the train. His engine shoved the caboose westward a short distance on No. 1 track and coupled to the empty tank car and he then boarded the leading end of the tank car on the north, or engineer's side, and gave a proceed signal with his lighted white lantern. After moving ahead about three car lengths and attaining a speed of about 3 miles per hour, he saw the cut of cars about three car lengths away, whereupon he gave his engineman a "three-car" signal and followed it immediately with stop signals when he noticed that the cars were moving toward him; his train had practically stopped when the collision occurred. He did not see anyone riding the front of the leading car of the other cut of cars, nor any light displayed thereon. The air was coupled between his engine and caboose, but not into the tank car. He was facing the storm and the snow interfered with vision. He did not know whether his conductor had any understanding with the other crew about both crews working from opposite ends of the yard at the same time. He did not know that Extra 8689 was still at Lanark while his engine was moving westward, and although it was usual to find the set-out cars at the west end of No. 1 track he was making the movement prepared to find them at any point. During this movement the conductor was in the caboose.

Head Brakeman Layman, of Extra 8655, stated that after the caboose coupled to the tank car on No. 1 track he got on the step at the northeast corner of the caboose. After moving westward slowly for about three car lengths the collision occurred; he thought their cut of cars was stopped at that time. Other statements made by the head brakeman were similar to those made by the flagman.

Conductor Wobig, of Extra 8689, stated that the air brakes were tested at Milwaukee and found to be 100 percent operative. The thirteenth to thirty-fifth cars, inclusive, in his train were to be set out on No. 1 track at Lanark, and as he had instructions to pick up a car from No. 2 track at that place, it was necessary to shove the set-out cars to clear No. 2 track, whereas usually they were placed to just clear the main track. Upon arrival at Lanark the head brakeman made the cut and the head end was pulled westward on the main track over the west switch of No. 1 track and then backed in on that track. Conductor Wobig was on the north side of No. 1 track east of No. 2-track switch and when the cut had reached a point on track No. 1 about 4 or 5 car lengths west of where he was standing he glanced toward the east to see if any movement was being made by the engine which had been standing at the east end of No. 1 track, but did not see any lantern signals or lights of any kind. He then placed himself where he could see his head brakeman and his flagman, and the cars continued to move into No. 1 track at a speed of 4 or 5 miles per hour. When the collision occurred his train stopped almost immediately. No rider was on the leading car of the cut being shoved into No. 1 track, and while this was not in accordance with the rules, it seemed safe to make the movement without a rider since he had noted that No. 1 track was clear eastward a sufficient distance to accommodate the cut being placed upon it without reaching the tank car already on that track. He was also depending upon the fact that it was usual for the pick-up engine to make no moves until the delivering train had departed. At Lanark the westward main track is within yard limits and his entire crew was available for making the set-out movement. He had made no arrangements with the crew of Extra 8655 regarding the movements he intended to make.

Head Brakeman Schultz, of Extra 8689, stated that he rode the cut of cars back in on No. 1 track for about 10 car lengths, then dropped off where he would be in view of his engineman, also of the conductor and the flagman who were in the vicinity of No. 2-track switch. The speed of the cut was about 5 or 6 miles per hour when he alighted; then he signalled his engineman to slow down and the speed was reduced to about 3 or 4 miles per hour. At all times visibility was good for seeing lighted signals.

The statement of Flagman McGarry, of Extra 8689, was similar to that of Conductor Wobig and Head Brakeman Schultz regarding the movements made at Lanark. He did not ride the leading car into No. 1 track because his survey of that track had convinced him that there was plenty of room for the cars to be set out. He has made similar moves in the same manner many times.

Discussion

The evidence indicates that a short time after Extra 8689 passed the east end of No. 1 track, the crew of Extra 8655 started to make up its train from the cars set out by Extra 8689. Engine 8655 shoved the caboose westward several car lengths and coupled to an empty tank car standing on No. 1 track, after which the westward movement was continued for about 3 or 4 car lengths at a speed of about 3 miles per hour when the brakeman riding the leading car noticed cars about 3 car lengths distant. He gave the engineman a "three-car" signal, and followed it immediately with a stop signal when he saw that the cars were moving towards him. Engine 8655 and the caboose and tank car to which it was coupled were stopped when the collision took place.

Extra 8689 was shoving a cut of 35 cars eastward on No. 1 track at a speed of 3 or 4 miles per hour, with neither a rider nor a light on the leading car. The rear 23 cars in this cut were to be left on No. 1 track and ordinarily would have been left just clear of the main track, but on this occasion as Extra 8689 was to pick up one car from No. 2 track it was necessary to place the set-out cars to clear that track. Although the crew of Extra 8689 knew that the movement was not being made in the manner required by the rules, they thought that it could be made safely by stationing the members of the train crew at advantageous positions on the ground, and they were also influenced by the fact that it is usual for the pick-up engine to remain stationary until the delivering train has departed.

It is probable that the accident would have been averted had the requirements of the rules applicable to movements on the tracks involved been obeyed, and it is possible that compliance with the requirements of the timetable rule forbidding the handling of cabooses between engines and freight cars during switching operations would have prevented the fatality.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by failure to require a trainman to occupy a conspicuous position on the leading car of a cut of cars being shoved on a yard track.

Respectfully submitted,
W. J. PATTERSON
Director.