

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE

CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC RAILWAY

LOGAN, N MEXICO

FEBRUARY 9, 1937

INVESTIGATION NO. 2142

SUMMARY

Inv.-2142

Railroad: Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific
Date: February 9, 1937
Location: Logan, N. M.
Kind of accident: Side collision
Trains involved: Freight : Passenger
Train numbers: Extra 5055 : No. 43
Engine numbers: 5055 : 4017
Consist: 83 cars and : 9 cars
caboose
Speed: Standing : 35-40 m.p.h.
Track: 0° 31' curve : 0.94^{percent}/descending grade
Weather: Clear
Time: 12.27 a.m.
Casualties: 2 killed and 34 injured
Cause: Extra 5055 occupying main track on
time of first-class train without
proper flag protection.

March 31, 1937.

To the Commission:

On February 9, 1937, there was a side collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway at Logan, N. Mex., which resulted in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 31 passengers and 3 employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on Sub-division 42 of the Panhandle Division of the Second District, which extends between Dalhart, Tex., and Tucumcari, N. Mex., a distance of 93.1 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no form of block-signal system being in use. At Logan a passing track, 4,017 feet in length, parallels the main track on the south, the west switch being located 1,821 feet west of the station, and the accident occurred at the fouling point of this switch. Approaching the point of accident from the east there is a 0° 31' curve to the left 9,537 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 333 feet from its western end. The grade is generally descending for west-bound trains for several miles, being 0.94 percent at the point of accident. The maximum speed allowed for passenger trains is 70 miles per hour on tangent track and 55 miles per hour on curves.

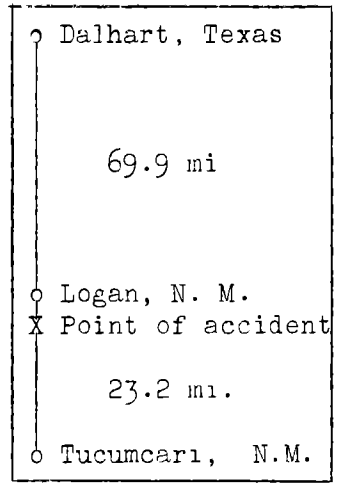
The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 12.27 a.m.

Description

Extra 5055, a west-bound freight train consisted of 83 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 5055, and was in charge of Conductor Miles and Engineman Warren. This train departed from Naravisa, N. M., 24.5 miles from Logan, at 9.23 p.m., February 8, and arrived at Logan at 11.58 p.m., according to the train sheet. The train entered the east switch of the passing track, which, having a capacity of but 77 cars, made it necessary to saw train No. 43 by at that point. The train pulled through the siding and stopped when the caboose cleared the east switch

P.C.

East passing-track switch



Direction of Train No. 43

0°31'
9,537 ft.

4,017 ft.

Station

Extra 5055 Standing

1,821 ft.

POINT OF ACCIDENT

57 ft

West passing-track switch

P.T.

Inv. No. 2142
C., R. I. & P. Ry.
Logan, New Mexico
February 9, 1937

which left the engine and first four cars out on the main track west of the west switch, where they were standing when sideswiped by Train No. 43.

Train No. 43, a west-bound passenger train, consisted of one mail car, two baggage cars, two chair cars, one standard Pullman sleeping car, two tourist Pullman sleeping cars, and one dining car, of all steel construction, hauled by engine 4017, and was in charge of Conductor Brown and Engineman Holmlund. This train passed Narevisa at 12.02 p.m., February 9, and sideswiped Extra 5055 at the west switch of the passing track at Logan while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 35 and 40 miles per hour.

The first four cars of Extra 5055 were demolished; engine 5055 was shoved ahead a distance of 616 feet, partially derailed, with its tender badly damaged. Engine 4017 was derailed to the right, but stopped badly damaged, in an upright position, approximately 226 feet beyond the point of accident. The first car of Train No. 43 was derailed and considerably damaged; the rear truck of the second car was derailed, while the third and fourth cars were derailed and slightly damaged. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman of Train No. 43 and the employees injured were the engineman, fireman and head brakemen of Extra 5055.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Warren, of Extra 5055, stated that he stopped his train about 8 or 10 car lengths east of the east passing track switch at Logan about 12.01 or 12.02 a.m., for the purpose of entering the siding. The train then slowly pulled through the passing track without stopping, passed the train order signal at the station, in the stop position and upon receiving a stop signal from the rear end of his train it was stopped with the engine and four head cars on the main track west of the west switch. He whistled out a flag at which time he thought it was about 12.05 a.m. Head Brakeman Chapman, who had opened the switches at each end of the siding, boarded the engine about the time the train stopped and on looking back he saw Train No. 43 approaching at a high rate of speed. The brakeman then also whistled out a flag, which Engineman Warren

thought was about 4 or 5 minutes after he himself had given the same signal. Brakeman Chapman then left the engine, lighted a fusee and started toward the approaching train. Engineman Warren said he looked back on the fireman's side, saw the reflection of the headlight of train No. 43, but did not see any red fusee other than the one the head brakeman was carrying, nor did he hear that train sound any whistle signal or explode any torpedoes. He then watched the head brakeman go back and did not hear his fireman warn him to get off, but he thought that the approaching train would stop. Engineman Warren further stated that visibility was good and the wind was from the southwest, and the flagman apparently had heard all previous whistle signals that evening.

The statements of Fireman Brown and Head Brakeman Chapman practically corroborated those of the engineman. Head Brakeman Chapman added that his train first stopped at Logan with the engine about 30 car lengths east of the east passing-track switch, and when it had stopped the second time, after the rear end cleared the east switch, he boarded the engine and sat on the fireman's seatbox, looking back and watching for train No. 43. He first saw that train when it was about 2 miles distant, and on not seeing any fusees at the rear of his train he whistled out a flag, at which time he thought that train No. 43 was between 200 and 300 yards east of the rear end of his train. He then started back to flag, with a white lantern and a red fusee; he saw that train No. 43 was traveling at a high rate of speed and knew that it had not been flagged. He began giving stop signals and continued to do so until the train passed him at a speed of between 30 and 40 miles per hour, with fire flying from the wheels. He thought that his train had been standing about 25 minutes at the time of the accident.

Conductor Miles, of Extra 5055, stated that on leaving Canode, 5.3 miles from Logan, he told Flagman Dix that they would probably have to saw trains Nos. 43 and 3 at Logan. When his train stopped to enter the siding at Logan, at which time he thought the engine was about 20 or 30 car lengths east of the switch, he told Flagman Dix to place torpedoes on the rail, and in addition to leaving the torpedoes the flagman left a fusee. He then discussed with the flagman the moves to be made at Logan; he told him that as they had work to do he would be over in the middle of the train until Train No. 43 was sawed by, after which they would back to the station to unload merchandise before the

arrival of train No. 3, as they had about 25 minutes between the two trains. Train No. 43 was due at Logan at 12.12 a.m., and train No. 3 at 12.42 a.m. When his train was about half-way in on the siding Conductor Miles climbed on top of the caboose in order to give a stop signal and he then walked over the top of the train to the station, a distance of about 40 car lengths. He stated that Flagman Dix threw off a second fusee about 15 or 20 car lengths east of the siding; he saw Flagman Dix close the switch, and the last he saw of him he was standing near the switch with a red and white lantern. Conductor Miles then went to the station where he received a train order which he was reading when he heard train No. 43 explode the torpedoes placed by his flagman; he immediately left the office and climbed on top of his train, and at that time the headlight of the approaching train was obscured by his caboose and he did not realize that the train had not been flagged. As the train approached the station, however, it was traveling at a speed of about 50 miles per hour and he gave stop signals with his white lantern, but he did not know whether the fireman saw them. Conductor Miles stated that he heard both of the whistle signals sounded for rear end protection, the first one being given when his train stopped on the siding and the second signal was sounded as he came out of the station. He also stated that in talking with Flagman Dix about the moves to be made at Logan, he did not mention the number of cars in the train, although when leaving Dalhart he told him the train consisted of 85 cars, and 2 cars had been set out after that time.

Flagman Dix, of Extra 5055 stated that on leaving Dalhart, he understood from the conductor that there were 75 cars in their train. On approaching Logan the conductor told him that he was going to the office to get orders and that when train No. 43 had passed, they would back out, take water and unload a car, and while this work was being performed he was to provide flag protection against train No. 3, and Flagman Dix stated that he intended to ride the caboose as his train backed out on the main line. Nothing was said about flagging against train No. 43, and he was so positive that his train was into clear that he turned the markers on the caboose. It had been necessary en route, to saw a train by at Middlewater, where the siding was of the same capacity as that at Logan but this, however, raised no question in his mind as to whether the siding at Logan would hold his train. The caboose stopped

on the passing track about 3 car lengths west of the switch and the flagman did not hear his engineman whistle for flag protection. He closed the switch and then stood about 50 feet from the rear of his caboose with a white lantern in his hand and fuses and torpedoes in his pockets, and while standing there he heard train No. 43 explode the torpedoes he had placed, and also heard that train sound a station whistle signal for Logan. As the train passed over the east switch at a speed of about 60 miles per hour he heard whistle signals from the head end of his own train, but he made no attempt to flag the train as it was then too late.

Head Brakeman Huff, of train No. 43, stated that he was in the vestibule of the sixth car in the train approaching Logan. The speed was reduced to about 30 miles per hour and he opened the vestibule door on the south side but did not hear any torpedoes exploded; on looking ahead he saw the green marker lights on the caboose of a train in the siding. He then looked out on the north side expecting to see the flagman on the opposite side of the switch but did not see any one. On passing the station, at which time the speed had been increased to about 50 miles per hour, he saw a man whom he assumed to be the operator on the platform, and in a very few seconds the air brakes were applied in emergency. The train then traveled a distance of about 8 or 10 car lengths when the accident occurred. After the accident he saw Head Brakeman Chapman with a burning fuse in his hand near the rear of train No. 43.

Conductor Brown, of train No. 43, did not hear any torpedoes exploded by his train and did not see the train on the siding until just prior to the accident. He felt an emergency application of the air brakes, which reduced the speed from 45 or 50 miles per hour to about 35 or 40 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Flagman Dyer, of train No. 43, who was in the vestibule of the car next to the rear car in the train, stated that he did not hear any torpedoes exploded as his train approached Logan. On passing the east passing track switch he saw a flagman with a white lantern in his hand about 20 feet east of the caboose but he did not receive any signals from him.

Operator Mowrer, on duty at Logan at the time of the accident, stated that when he saw Extra 5055 stop

east of the east passing track switch he reported its arrival time as 11.58 p.m. The train order signal was displaying a red indication and as the engine passed the station he was copying a train order for that train, the order being made complete at 12.10. Conductor Miles came to the office for orders about 12 or 14 minutes later and while there said that he saw the reflection of the headlight of train No. 43 and that he had to go out and help make the necessary passing movements for train No. 43; he walked across the track and started to climb onto his train. Operator Mowrer cleared the train order signal and followed the conductor outside taking his white lantern with him. The headlight of train No. 43 then came into view and he saw Conductor Miles waving his lantern when the train was about 10 car lengths distant. Operator Mowrer said he saw some one in the middle of train No. 43 as it passed and he also saw someone standing between the last two cars, but he did not realize that an accident was imminent until the rear cars were almost by. Operator Mowrer also stated that he did not hear any torpedoes exploded by train No. 43.

Discussion

There is considerable discrepancy in the statements of Conductor Miles and Flagman Dix as to the understanding of the number of cars in their train and the moves to be made at Logan. Conductor Miles said he told the flagman there were 85 cars in the train, while Flagman Dix said he understood him to say there were 75 cars. Conductor Miles also stated that he told the flagman that they would pass by Trains Nos. 43 and 3 at Logan, while Flagman Dix understood they would perform their work between passing of the two trains and that it would be necessary to flag against Train No. 3 while this work was being performed, nothing being said about flagging Train No. 43, and he was so positive that his train was in the clear that he turned the caboose marker lights. The evidence indicates that as soon as the train stopped on the siding a whistle signal for flag protection was sounded by the engineman, yet the flagman failed either to hear or to obey this signal but instead relied on his belief that since 2 cars had been set out en route the train consisted of only 73 cars and was therefore into clear. It had been necessary, however, to see a train by at Middlewater where the siding was of the same capacity as that at Logan, and Flagman Dix should have

realized that it would be necessary to do the same at Logan. The statement of the flagman to the effect that it was his intention to ride the caboose of his train as it backed out of the siding to perform work after train No. 43 had passed, in which event his train would not have been afforded proper protection, indicates an indifference to, or a lack of realization of, his responsibilities as a flagman.

Conductor Miles is at fault for not definitely knowing that proper flag protection was provided. He walked over his train to the station and stated that he last saw the flagman standing near the switch with a red and white lantern. Flagman Dix, however, stated that he had with him only a white lantern.

A check of the traffic in this territory during the 30 days preceding the date of the accident disclosed an average daily movement of approximately 14 trains. This accident is of the type, which in all probability, would have been prevented under an adequate system of blocking trains and in view of the circumstances surrounding this accident it is believed that officers of this carrier should give serious consideration to the advisability of installing the block system on this line.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by Extra 5055 occupying the main track on the time of a first-class train, without proper flag protection.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,
Director.