

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2715
THE CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS
RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR OHLMAN, ILL., ON
AUGUST 2, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago
& St. Louis

Date: August 2, 1943

Location: Oakman, Ill.

Kind of accident: Train struck track laborers

Train involved: Express

Train number: Second 431

Engine number: 4929

Consist: 12 cars

Speed: 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Automatic block-signal and
automatic train-stop system

Track: Double; tangent; practically level

Weather: Clear

Time: 9:05 a. m.

Casualties: 9 killed

Cause: Failure to provide proper
protection for track laborers

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2715

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS
RAILWAY COMPANY

August 28, 1943.

Accident near Ohlman, Ill., on August 2, 1943, caused by
failure to provide proper protection for track
laborers.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On August 2, 1943, an express train on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway struck men working on the track near Ohlman, Ill. This accident resulted in the death of nine men.

1

Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Illinois Division extending between Mattoon and Hillsboro, Ill., 66 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by an automatic block-signal system, the indications of which superseded time-table superiority, and an automatic train-stop system. The accident occurred on the westward main track at a point 2.2 miles west of Ohlman. As the point of accident was approached from the east the track was tangent about 5 miles. At this point the grade was practically level.

At the time of the accident 8 members of a section gang of 14 men were operating pneumatic tools in tamping ballast. A gasoline-engine-driven air-compressor, which furnished power for the tamping tools, was located on the south side of the tracks, 85 feet east of the point of accident.

The maximum authorized speed for express trains was 80 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Second 431, a west-bound first-class express train, consisted of engine 4929, 11 express cars and 1 coach, in the order named. This train passed Pana, 8.3 miles east of Ohlman and the last open office, at 8:54 a.m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 4 hours 11 minutes late, passed Ohlman, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it struck 9 members of the track crew.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 9:05 a.m.

Nine laborers of the section gang were killed.

Discussion

Second 431 was moving on tangent track at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed was 80 miles per hour when it struck and fatally injured 9 members of a section gang of 14 men who were working on the track. As Second 431 was approaching the vicinity, the speed was about 65 miles per hour and the

enginemmen were maintaining a lookout ahead. No train order restricting the movement of this train had been issued. No warning signal restricting the speed of Second 431 was placed in the vicinity and no flag protection was provided by the track laborers. When the engine was a considerable distance east of the point of accident the enginemmen observed the sectionmen on the track. When the engine reached a point about 1,400 feet east of the sectionmen, the engineer sounded an alarm signal on the engine whistle and continued to sound the whistle until the accident occurred. When the engine reached a point about 1,000 feet east, he moved the brake valve to emergency position and the train stopped with the engine standing about 800 feet west of the point of accident.

According to statements of the 5 surviving members of the section gang, 8 of the men killed were tamping ballast with pneumatic tamping tools and one was shoveling ballast. These men were working at a point about 85 feet west of the air-compressor. The exhaust of the air-compressor engine and the noise made by the tamping tools prevented the men from hearing the approaching train. It had been the practice of the foreman to maintain a lookout and to warn the men of approaching trains. However, at the time of the accident the foreman was engaged in shoveling ballast, and he did not assign any other employee to lookout duty.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide proper protection for track laborers.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-eighth day of August, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.