

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
LITCHFIELD AND MADISON RAILWAY

STALLINGS, ILL.

FEBRUARY 13, 1936.

INVESTIGATION NO. 2043

SUMMARY

Railroad: Litchfield and Madison
Date: February 13, 1936
Location: Stallings, Ill.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Mixed : Freight
Train numbers: I.C. No. 546 : L.& M. No. 386
Engine numbers: 758 : 161
Consist: 10 cars and caboose : 18 cars and
: caboose
Speed: Slow speed : 12 to 25 m.p.h.
Track: Tangent; practically level
Weather: Dense fog
Time: 12:06 p.m.
Casualties: 1 killed and 5 injured
Cause: Failure of engineman to operate
train under proper control in dense
fog; contributing cause was failure
of flagman to provide adequate flag
protection.

April 21, 1936.

To the Commission:

On February 13, 1936, there was a rear-end collision between an Illinois Central mixed train and a Litchfield and Madison freight train on the tracks of the latter railroad at Stallings, Ill., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 5 employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Litchfield and Madison Railway which extends between Glen Carbon and Madison, Ill., a distance of 10.06 miles, and over which trains of the Illinois Central Railroad also are operated. This 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. The book of transportation rules of the Illinois Central Railroad is used on this line. The accident occurred at a point approximately 425 feet south of the water tank at Stallings. The track is tangent and practically level for more than 1 mile in each direction from the point of accident.

A dense fog prevailed at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:06 p.m.

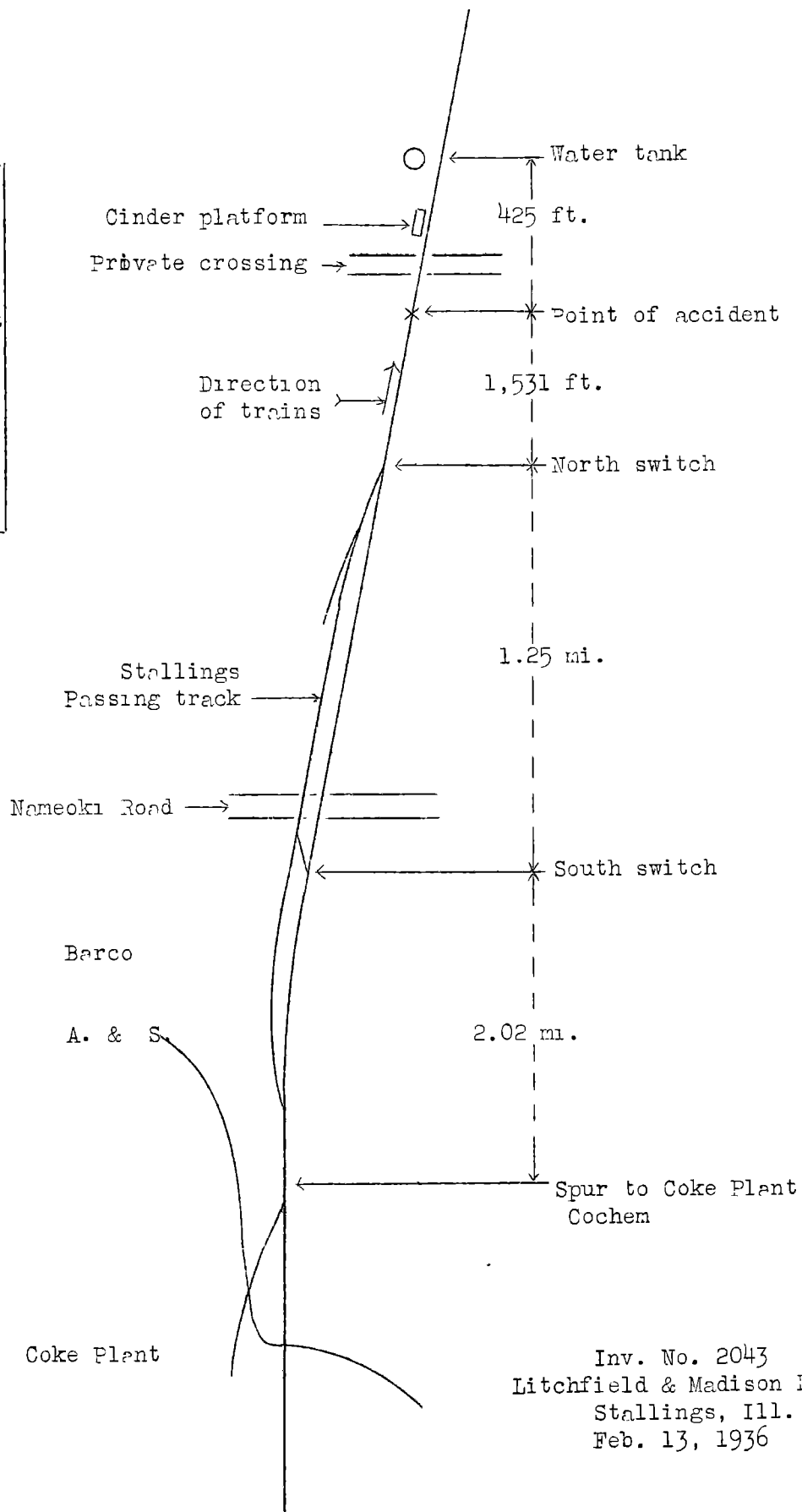
Description

Train No. 546, a north-bound I.C. mixed train, consisted of 8 freight cars, 1 flat car, 2 work cars and a caboose, hauled by I.C. engine 738, and was in charge of Conductor Harris and Engineman Francis. This train departed from East St. Louis, its initial terminal, at 8:05 a.m., and arrived at Madison, 5.94 miles from Stallings, at 8:40 a.m. Work was performed at this point and the train entered the tracks of the Litchfield and Madison Railway at 11:44 a.m., according to the train sheet, 4 hours 36 minutes late, and proceeded to Cochem, 3.27 miles from Stallings, where it picked up 2 cars. On leaving that point at 11:59 a.m. the train consisted of 7 freight cars, 1 flat car, 2 work cars and a caboose, and while moving at a very low rate of speed, preparatory to taking water at Stallings, its rear end was struck by L. & M. Train No. 386.

Train No. 386, a northbound L. & M. freight train, consisted of 18 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 161, and was in charge of Conductor Johnson and Engineman Ostendorf. This train departed from Madison, its initial terminal, at 11:50 a.m., according to the train sheet, 1 hour 10 minutes late, and collided with the rear end of Train No. 546 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 12 and 25 miles per hour.



• Glen Carbon, Ill.	
	4.12 mi.
• Stallings	
✕ Point of accident	1.25 mi.
• Barco	2.02 mi.
• Cochem	
	2.67 mi.
• Madison, Ill.	



Inv. No. 2043
 Litchfield & Madison R.R.
 Stallings, Ill.
 Feb. 13, 1936

The caboose and five rear cars were derailed and scattered on both sides of the track; the caboose was destroyed and the cars badly damaged. Engine 161 of Train No. 386 stopped near a private road crossing about 52 feet beyond the point of accident, with its front end badly damaged. A section motor car standing on the cinder platform just beyond the road crossing was totally demolished. The employee killed was a car repairman of the I.C. train and those injured were three car repairmen of the I.C. train and the fireman and brakeman of the L. & M. train.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Francis, of I.C. Train No. 546, stated that there was a long delay at Madison, due to waiting and meeting several south-bound trains, and his train departed, after Brakeman Harris advised him that the crew of the L. & M. train would take care of the switch which they used to enter the main line. While performing work at Cochem he saw two burning fuses to the rear of his train. After leaving that point his train attained a speed of 25 miles per hour, but on reaching the passing track at Stallings he reduced the speed to about 10 or 12 miles per hour. A dense fog prevailed and he could see ahead for a distance of about 11 car lengths; he had his train under control and was approaching the water tank at a speed of about 1 mile per hour when the collision occurred; the force of the impact drove his engine forward about 35 feet. As yet he had not whistled out a flag, stating that he does not whistle out a flag at stations until after the train has stopped; the headlight on his engine was burning and he could see the markers on the caboose dimly. After the accident, he saw Flagman Chamberlain about 3 or 4 car lengths south of the engine of the L. & M. train, with a half burned red fuse and a red flag in his hand.

Fireman Daniels, of I.C. Train No. 546, stated that the fog was heavier at Stallings than it was at Madison; he thought a caboose ahead could have been seen for a distance of 10 or 12 car lengths. His first warning of anything wrong was when he heard short blasts of the whistle of the following train, followed immediately by the accident. While the speed of his train had been reduced to 10 or 12 miles per hour at the passing track at Stallings, he thought it would have been unsafe for the flagman to have left the caboose at a point more than 10 or 15 car lengths from the point of accident, due to the slippery walking; the speed of his train at the time of accident was 1 or 2 miles per hour. He also saw Flagman Chamberlain, after the accident, with a lighted fuse about half burned.

Head Brakeman Bolinger, of I.C. Train No. 546, stated that on stopping at Cochem the engineman whistled out a flag, and

while performing work he saw the flagman standing about 10 or 12 car lengths from the caboose, although he did not see a burning fusee at any time.

Conductor Harris, of I.C. Train No. 546, stated that as his train was leaving Madison his flagman advised him that he had notified the head brakeman of the L.& M. train that they would pick up cars at Cochem and take water at Stallings. On approaching the Coke Plant at Cochem the flagman threw off a lighted fusee about 11:50 a.m., and left another lighted fusee when he was recalled, at 11:59 a.m., after the work had been performed. Conductor Harris stated that he could see this fusee burning for a distance of 30 or 40 car lengths. He was standing in the rear end of the caboose with the door open and saw the flagman throw off a fusee in the vicinity of Nemeeki road crossing, about 150 car lengths south of the water tank at Stallings, and another one near the telephone booth at the north end of the passing track, about 50 car lengths from the water tank. He had just started to sit down when the head brakeman called a warning of danger; he looked back and saw the flagman with a burning fusee giving a stop signal, and immediately jumped off, at which time the approaching train was about 5 car lengths from his caboose. While the speed of his train had been reduced, he thought it was too high for the flagman to have gotten off safely when passing the north switch of the passing track. No torpedoes were used, as the train had not stopped, and there was not sufficient time for the flagman to have placed them an effective distance behind the caboose. He estimated the speed of the L.& M. train to have been about 25 miles per hour when they collided.

Flagman Chamberlain, of I.C. Train No. 546, stated that engine 161 of the L.& M. train was standing behind his caboose at Madison when he informed the brakeman of that train relative to the stops to be made by his own train. He provided protection at Cochem, throwing off a fusee on approaching that point and before leaving, and while there he saw the L.& M. train approaching to the rear of his train and about 40 car lengths distant. On approaching Stallings he threw off the first fusee just north of the road crossing in the vicinity of the south end of the passing track, but he could not observe this fusee for any great distance as the fog was too dense. The next fusee was thrown off near the telephone booth at the north end of the passing track and he was quite positive it was burning. He left the caboose while it was moving at a speed of 8 or 10 miles per hour, and although the track was icy he did not lose his footing as he got off. He was about 6 or 8 car lengths from his caboose when he heard the L.& M. train approaching and it appeared to be about 8 car lengths from him; it was traveling at a speed of about 25 miles per hour, and ran by him a distance of about 10 car lengths. After the accident, he brake-

man of the L. & M. train told him that he had seen three fuses.

Middle Brakeman Harris, of I. C. Train No. 546, stated that his attention was first attracted to the following train when he saw the flagman giving stop signals with his fusee, about 10 or 12 car lengths from the rear of the caboose; he saw the flagman jump to the left of the track and then saw the headlight of the approaching train. He warned the conductor, who was sitting at his desk, and jumped off, the collision occurring immediately afterwards. He estimated the speed of his own train to have been between 30 and 35 miles per hour on passing the north switch of the passing track, but it was traveling at a very low rate of speed at the time he got off. He stated that it is the practice for the flagman to get off just before the train stops. The members of the crew of the I. C. train stated that while they had been examined on the transportation rules, they had never been examined on the special rules contained in the L. & M. time table.

Engineman Ostendorf, of L. & M. Train No. 386, stated that on finding a burning fusee at a point about 30 car lengths south of the switch at Cochem he stopped his train and extinguished the fusee. He proceeded at a speed not to exceed 25 miles per hour and after passing Nameoki road crossing in the vicinity of the south end of the passing track at Stallings he closed the throttle from two-thirds open to one-third open. He did not see another fusee until just prior to the collision, when he saw the flagman running down the middle of the track with a burning fusee, about one car length from the caboose of the I. C. train. Engineman Ostendorf immediately closed the throttle, applied the air brakes in emergency and sounded short blasts on the whistle. He stated that his speed did not exceed 20 miles per hour when he first saw the flagman; that he had only 6 or 8 car lengths in which to stop his train before striking the caboose; yet he said that the speed of his train was 10 or 12 miles per hour at the time of the accident. Due to the fog, which was the heaviest at Stallings, he was able to see ahead but a distance of 6 or 8 car lengths, and he kept his head out of the side window. His engine stopped about on the private road crossing just beyond the point of accident. Engineman Ostendorf further stated that on finding no fuses approaching Stallings, he took it for granted that the train ahead had proceeded a sufficient distance so that no flag protection was needed. Before leaving Madison, the head brakeman of the I. C. train had informed him that they would stop at Cochem to pick up cars, but nothing was said about stopping at Stallings for water, and he did not intend to stop his own train for water at that point. On leaving Madison he did not know whether or not all the air brakes on his train were operative, however they functioned properly when he made the stop at Cochem, that

being the last time he applied them until just prior to the accident.

Fireman Long, of L. & M. Train 386, stated that he did not see a fusee after leaving Cochem until he saw the flash of a fusee just as the flagman was getting off the caboose, about 6 car lengths ahead. He jumped off his engine when it was about 2 car lengths from the caboose and he estimated the speed of his train to have been about 15 miles per hour at that time.

Head Brakeman Dailey of the L. & M. Train 386, stated he was sitting on the left side of the cab approaching Stallings, with his head out of the window, looking ahead, but at no time did he see a fusee after leaving Cochem, until he saw a flash about 7 or 8 car lengths ahead, at which time the engineman applied the air brakes in emergency. He immediately went to the other side of the cab and started to get off, and at that time he thought the flash of the fusee was from the caboose, but it might have been a flagman on the ground. He jumped off when his engine was about 2 car lengths from the caboose, and while his train was traveling at a speed of 15 or more miles per hour.

Conductor Johnson, of L. & M. Train No. 386, stated that after his train was assembled at Madison an air brake test was made and on the second car from the caboose the brakes were sticking; he cut out and bled the brakes on this car and on leaving that point the gauge in the caboose showed a pressure of 70 pounds. In the vicinity of the north passing track switch at Stallings the speed was reduced to 15 or 18 miles per hour, and he thought that the train traveled a distance of 5 or 6 car lengths after the air brakes were applied in emergency.

Flagman Piper, of L. & M. Train No. 386, stated that as soon as his train stopped, his engineman whistled out a flag and he went back as far as Nameoki Road, but he saw no fusees on the track. Before leaving Madison, he was informed by a man he thought was the conductor of the I.C. train, that the I.C. train would stop to pick up cars at Cochem, and Flagman Piper gave this information to his engineman; nothing was said about taking water at Stallings.

George W. Handlon, son of the general manager of the L. & M. R.R., who accompanied his father to the scene of the accident, stated that on walking back over the track, he found a fusee about 10 car lengths from the private road crossing near the cinder platform; this fusee had been ignited and the cap was lying about 2 or 3 rail lengths north of the fusee. He looked farther south but could find no other fusees.

Conductor Kileen, in charge of the I.C. wrecker, stated that about 9 p.m. he found a fusee lying in the middle of the

track in the vicinity of the Nameoki road crossing; it had been lighted but had burned very little.

General Car Foreman Waters, of the I.C. R.R., stated that he tested the air brakes of L. & M. Train No. 386 at the scene of the accident and found that all brakes operated properly with the exception of the second car from the caboose, the air brakes on this car having been cut out.

Terminal Trainmaster Thomas, of the L. & M. R.R., located at Madison, stated that while rule 2 of the time table specifies that all trains will, unless the track is known to be clear, approach stations, water tanks and coal chutes under full control, expecting to find main track occupied by another train, an exception has been made to first-class trains.

The main track was cleared for traffic at 5:30 p.m. and a check of the train sheet shows that between that time and 9 p.m. four trains passed between Madison and Stallings and one north-bound freight train stopped and set out some cars on the north end of the Stallings passing track. There are 6 daily passenger trains scheduled over this part of the railway, and the record shows the total traffic for the 30 days preceding the date of this accident averaged nearly 28 trains per day.

Discussion

Rule 11 of the I.C. rules provides that a train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee, and then proceed with caution prepared to stop short of train or obstruction. Rule 2 of the special rules contained in the L. & M. time table provides that all trains will, unless the track is known to be clear, approach stations, water tanks and coal chutes under full control, expecting to find main track occupied by another train.

A dense fog prevailed at the time of the accident, it being worse in the vicinity of Stallings where the view was limited to but a few hundred feet, necessitating extra caution in the operation of trains. Engineman Ostendorf was fully aware that he was closely following the I.C. train, having stopped at Cochem to extinguish a burning fusee left by that train, yet he operated his train at a speed of 25 miles per hour on approaching Stallings, reducing the speed only slightly on passing the passing track, and according to his own statement was proceeding at a speed of 20 miles per hour when he saw the flagman a short distance ahead with a burning fusee, it then being too late to avert the accident. Engineman Ostendorf stated that on finding no burning fusee after leaving Cochem he took it for granted

that the train ahead had proceeded a sufficient distance so that flag protection was not needed. The other members of the crew also stated that at no time did they see a burning fusee after leaving Cochem until just prior to the occurrence of the accident. While the statements of the various members of the L. & M. train indicated that the speed had been reduced, to between 12 and 18 miles per hour, at the time of the accident, the statements of the train crew of the I. C. train indicated the speed to have been about 25 miles per hour, and from the damage sustained by the cars in the I. C. train it is believed that the latter speed is more nearly correct.

Flagman Chamberlain stated that he threw off a lighted fusee in the vicinity of the south end of the passing track and also one near the north end; his statements were corroborated by the conductor. The flagman then dropped off the caboose just as his train was coming to a stop and, according to his own statements, he was back about 6 or 8 car lengths from his train when the following train appeared.

Flagman Piper, of L. & M. Train No. 386 had walked over the track as far as Nameoki road crossing, when he went back to flag, immediately after the accident, and Mr. Handlon, the son of the General Manager of the L. & M. Railway had walked over the same portion of track, looking for fusees, very shortly after the accident, and neither of these men found remnants of a fusee between the north end of the siding and this crossing.

This raises a doubt as to whether a fusee was placed between these points as stated by Flagman Chamberlain and Conductor Harris; and although a partially burned fusee was found near Nameoki road crossing about 9 hours after the accident, several trains had passed within that time, one of which had set out cars on the passing track.

A partially burned fusee was picked up by Mr. Handlon soon after the accident, about 10 car lengths south of the crossing near which the accident occurred; this was a considerable distance north of the point where Flagman Chamberlain and Conductor Harris claim the last fusee was placed, but as it was the only one found before the passage of other trains, it seems probable this fusee was placed by Flagman Chamberlain. If this is so, then it was dropped such a short distance behind the caboose as to afford but little protection, even though it had remained burning.

The investigation developed that the I. C. employees operating over this road had never been instructed or examined on the rules contained in the L. & M. time table and, further, according to the statement of the terminal trainmaster, rule 2 which states that, "all trains will, unless the track is known

to be clear, approach stations, water tanks and coal chutes under full control, expecting to find main track occupied by another train", does not apply to first-class trains. No modification of this rule appears and the schedules of these trains indicate that no provision has been made for the observation of the rule. There are two first-class trains scheduled to move from Madison to Glen Carbon, a distance of 10.06 miles, in 12 minutes, and between these points there are four stations, a railroad crossing, a water tank, and a junction. This investigation revealed the necessity for modification of the special rules appearing in the time table and the institution and maintenance of a more extensive practice in the instruction and qualification of its trainmen in transportation rules.

Conclusion

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Ostendorf of L. & M. Train No. 386 to operate his train under control approaching a station in a dense fog; a contributing cause was the failure of Flagman Chamberlain of I. C. Train No. 546 to provide proper flag protection in view of existing weather conditions.

Recommendation

It is recommended that this carrier give consideration to the need for the additional protection on this line which would be afforded by adoption of an adequate block-signal system.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON

Director.