

1918

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN ACCIDENT ON THE NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN & HARTFORD RAILROAD AT FALL RIVER, MASS., ON JUNE 30, 1934.

August 8, 1934.

To the Commission:

On June 30, 1934, there was a head-end collision between a gas-electric rail car and a passenger train on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at Fall River, Mass., which resulted in the injury of 6 passengers and 7 employees, 2 of whom were deadheading. This accident was investigated in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Boston Division extending between Middleboro, Mass., and Newport, R. I., a distance of 37.57 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. The accident occurred within yard limits on the main track at a point about 4,640 feet south of the station at Fall River, just north of the viaduct at Anawan Street; approaching this point from the north the track is tangent for a distance of about 300 feet, followed by a 5° curve to the right 443 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point about 55 feet from its northern end. The grade at the point of accident is 0.26 percent ascending for southbound trains. Track 5 parallels the main track on the west, and there is a crossover connecting these tracks, extending from northeast to southwest, located about 550 feet north of the station.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1:10 p.m.

Description

Southbound passenger Train No. 841 consisted of gas-electric rail car 9101 and was in charge of Conductor Wood and Engineman Downing. It arrived at Fall River, where its schedule terminates, at 1:03 p.m., on time; the passengers were discharged at the station and work of unloading mail, express and baggage was performed; the operator in the station verbally instructed the conductor to make a back-up movement northward

Direction of rail car 9101

P.T.

300 ft.

4,640 ft. to Fall River Station

P.C. * 55 ft.

Point of accident

5°
443 ft.

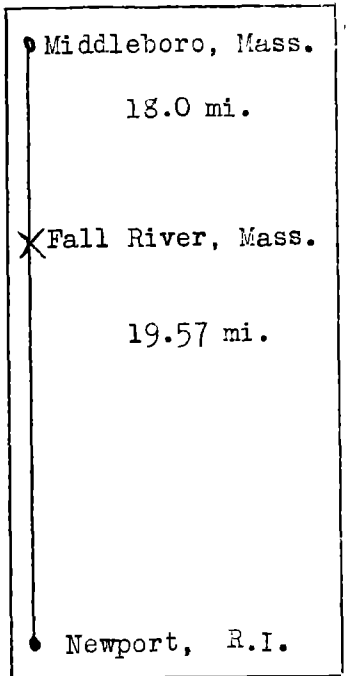
1,795 ft. to Ferry Street Station

Anaven St. (viaduct)

P.T.

Direction of Extra PX 827

Inv. No. 1918
New York, New Haven & Hartford RR
Fall River, Mass.
June 30, 1934



on the main track to the crossover and then proceed southward on track 5 to the enginehouse at Globe yard, and he also delivered to the conductor two copies of clearance card, form A, which gave authority to pass the train order signal on track 5. Instead of backing northward to the crossover as instructed, however, the gas-electric car departed from Fall River station, passed the train order signal in stop position, continued southward on the main track and collided with Extra PX 827 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 15 miles per hour.

Northbound passenger train Extra PX 827 consisted of 3 cars, all of steel construction, hauled by engine 827, and was in charge of Conductor Carr and Engineman Brightman. This train left Ferry Street Station at 1:08 p.m., and on reaching a point 1,795 feet beyond collided with gas-electric car 9101 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 10 and 15 miles per hour.

The force of the impact drove gas-electric car 9101 backward a distance of about 70 feet, and it stopped upright, but derailed, with its forward end crushed in and the motor practically destroyed, the front end of engine 827 being wedged in it. The front end of engine 827 was damaged, and the engine and tender broke apart. The employees injured were the engineman, fireman, and trainman of Extra PX 827, and the engineman, conductor and baggagemaster of gas-electric car 9101, as well as an engine preparer who was deadheading on the rail car.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Wood, of gas-electric car 9101, stated that on arrival at Fall River, the end of the scheduled run, he went into the office and registered. Operator Burgess gave him two copies of clearance card, form A, which authorized his train to pass the train order signal on track 5, and in addition the operator verbally instructed the conductor to make a back-up movement northward on the main track to the crossover and then proceed southward on track 5 to the enginehouse. On returning to the rail car, Engineman Downing was helping to unload newspapers and the conductor merely made a motion to the engineman with the clearance cards by holding them up between his fingers, in order to indicate to the engineman that he had received them, and he said that the engineman saw them as he held them; the conductor then put them in the mail rack without personally having delivered copy of the clearance card to the engineman and without having told the engineman of instructions that had been given by the operator about making the back-up movement to the crossover and using track 5. Shortly afterwards the gas-electric car departed southward on the main track, having passed

the train order signal in stop position, instead of making the back-up movement to the crossover and then using track 5, and the clearance card and the verbal instructions of the operator entirely slipped his mind; he was busy turning the seats and the first he realized that anything was wrong was when the brakes were applied suddenly and he saw the engineman run out of the motor room; at the time the collision occurred he estimated the speed to have been about 15 miles per hour. Conductor Wood said that he had been on this particular run about 2 years and that track 5 was seldom used, the usual procedure being to use the main track. On arrival at Fall River it was customary for the engineman and conductor to assist in unloading the mail, express and baggage and the engineman ordinarily would ask whether it was "all right down the main" and the conductor would reply that it was, but that in this instance he did not remember having heard the engineman say anything in this connection; he thought that had the engineman said something of this nature it would have reminded him of the clearance card and the fact that their rail car was required to back-up to the crossover and use track 5.

Engineman Dowling, of gas-electric car 9101, stated that when the run is completed and work finished at Fall River ordinarily the car proceeds southward on the main track under authority of a clearance card to the yardmaster's office and enginehouse. On this occasion the conductor went into the office and on returning to the car the conductor said "all right down the main." The engineman could not say positively whether the conductor had a copy of the clearance card in his hand, although clearance cards had always been obtained previously and this was the only instance he could remember that the conductor did not hand him a copy of the clearance card; he said that no mention was made of track 5. After departing from the station at Fall River he proceeded southward on the main track at a moderate rate of speed and the first he knew of anything wrong was on seeing the opposing train rounding the curve; he immediately shut off the power, applied the air brakes in emergency, got out of the motor room and then the collision occurred, at which time he estimated the speed to have been about 15 miles per hour. The air brakes worked properly.

Engineman Brightman, of Extra PX 827, stated that on arrival at Fall River his train stopped near the enginehouse, following which a car was set off; then the yardmaster informed him that the crew of the gas-electric car had been instructed to make a back-up movement northward to the crossover at Fall River station and proceed southward to the enginehouse on track 5. Extra PX 827 then proceeded to the station at Ferry Street, where

the conductor registered, following which the train departed. Engineman Brightman was on the outside of the curve and estimated the speed of his train through the yard limits to have been about 15 or 20 miles per hour; he said that the fireman, after wetting down coal, got up and looked out of the window and shut off the injector, following which the fireman looked out again and gave warning of the gas-electric car, just as the engine passed under the viaduct at Anawan Street, whereupon the engineman applied the brakes in emergency and then the collision occurred. The air brakes had been tested and worked properly en route. Engineman Brightman considered that he was moving under control within yard limits in view of the information he had received from the yardmaster. Statements of Fireman Drake corroborated in substance those of Engineman Brightman; the fireman estimated the speed to have been about 10 or 12 miles per hour and said the gas-electric car was about three car lengths away when he first saw it. Other members of the crew were unaware of anything wrong until the air brakes were applied in emergency just prior to the accident.

Yardmaster McKowen, at Fall River, stated that movements within the yard limits were made under his direction; in this instance he got a line-up from the dispatcher as to the location of the two trains involved; he then telephoned Operator Burgess at Fall River station, at 12:55 p.m., and told him to instruct the crew of the southbound gas-electric car, when they completed work at the station, to back-up to the crossover and then proceed southward on track 5 to the enginehouse. When northbound Extra PX 827 arrived at the enginehouse the yardmaster informed the engineman of that train that the crew of the rail car had instructions to use track 5, and he also told the engineman to look out for the rail car at Fall River station. Extra PX 827 left Ferry Street station at 1:08 p.m., and the first the yardmaster knew of anything wrong was when the operator telephoned about 1:09 p.m., and told him that the rail car had left the station and proceeded southward on the main track instead of using track 5 as instructed, but it was then too late to stop either train. Yardmaster McKowen said the information he gave to the engineman of Extra PX 827 in no way relieved the engineman of responsibility with respect to operating under the requirements of the yard limit rule. He also stated that it was customary for the gas-electric car to move southward on the main track to the enginehouse, but that occasionally it was necessary to have this car move southward on track 5 to the enginehouse and that the movement was not an entirely new one to the crew involved.

Operator Burgess confirmed the statement of Yardmaster McKowen as to the instructions issued; also, he delivered to the conductor of the gas-electric car copy of clearance card, form A, containing authority to pass the train order signal on track 5,

and he personally instructed the conductor to make a back-up movement to the cross-over north of Fall River station. Later when the operator saw the gas-electric car depart southward on the main track he endeavored to attract the attention of the crew and stop the car, but he was unable to do so because the car made so much noise. The train order signal was in stop position.

Trainmaster Smith said that the engineman of the gas-electric car had no right to leave the station at Fall River after completing the run without personally having received a copy of the clearance card or unless the train order signal was displaying a clear indication; also that the information given to the engineman of Extra PX 827 by the yardmaster to the effect that the crew of the rail car had instructions to use track 5, in no way relieved the engineman from properly complying with the requirements of the yard limit rule; and that had both crews involved properly observed the yard limit rule the accident could have been averted.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by gas-electric car 9101 departing from the station at Fall River on the main track instead of on another track designated in a clearance card and in verbal instructions received from the operator; also by the failure of the enginemen of both trains involved to move under proper control within yard limits.

On arrival at Fall River station on the main track, where the schedule of the gas-electric car terminated, Conductor Wood went into the office and registered. The train order signal was in stop position and the operator gave the conductor two copies of clearance card, form A, authorizing the gas-electric car to pass the train order signal southward on track 5; in addition the operator verbally instructed the conductor to make a back-up movement northward to the cross-over and then proceed southward on track 5 to the enginehouse. When the conductor returned to the rail car he did not personally deliver a copy of the clearance card to the engineman, but merely indicated to the engineman that he had received them, and he did not impart to the engineman the verbal instructions of the operator to make a back-up movement to the cross-over and to use track 5 to the enginehouse. The engineman said that on returning to the rail car from the office the conductor said "all right down the main," while the conductor said that ordinarily the engineman asked whether it was "all right down the main," but he did not remember having heard the engineman say anything of this nature this time; the gas-electric car departed on the main track instead of using track 5 as directed

and the conductor apparently overlooked or forgot the clearance card and the verbal instructions of the operator. The clearance card designated the track to be used on this movement and had the engineman secured or been given a copy the accident might have been averted.

Under the rules, extra trains are required to move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. On arrival of Extra PX 827 at Ferry Street station, Engineman Brightman was informed by Yardmaster McKowen that the crew of the rail car had been instructed to use track 5 from Fall River station to the enginehouse, and the engineman relied upon this information to a certain extent for protection; however, this information in no way relieved the engineman from complying with the requirements of the yard limit rule. Had both crews observed the yard limit rule and moved prepared to stop, the accident would have been averted.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.