

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE LINE OF THE ALTON, GRANITE & ST. LOUIS TRAC-  
TION COMPANY AT NAMEOKI, ILL., ON NOVEMBER 2, 1925.

January 22, 1926.

To the Commission:

On November 2, 1925, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the line of the Alton, Granite & St. Louis Traction Company at Nameoki, Ill., which resulted in the death of 3 employees, and the injury of 28 passengers and 1 employee. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

#### Location and method of operation

The Alton, Granite & St. Louis Traction Company is an electric railway extending between St. Louis, Mo., and Alton, Ill., a distance of 26.15 miles; in the vicinity of the point of accident it is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point about 1,300 feet north of the station at Nameoki, approaching this point from the north the track is tangent for more than 1 mile, approaching from the south there is a curve of 40° 7' which is 150 feet in length, where the track passes around a street corner, followed by tangent track to the point of accident, about 1,138 feet distant. The grade is practically level from the curve to the point of accident and for a considerable distance beyond.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred between 9.30 and 9.40 a. m.

#### Description

Southbound second-class passenger train No. 5 consisted of motor 35, of wooden construction, and was in charge of Conductor Scarrett and Motorman Roeder. It departed from Alton, Ill., at 8.58 a. m., 38 minutes late, and upon arriving

at Hartford, 7.8 miles north of Nameoki, at about 9.17 a.m., the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 51, Form 19, reading as follows.

"No. 5 ntr 35 meet No 8 ntr 39 at Mitchell instead of Granite."

Mitchell is 5.77 miles south of Hartford and 2.08 miles north of Nameoki. Train No. 5 entered the siding to meet train No. 52, received copies of the train order referred to, and departed, probably at about 9.20 a. m., 58 minutes late. It passed Mitchell without stopping to meet train No. 8 and finally collided with that train near Nameoki.

Northbound second-class passenger train No. 8 consisted of motor 39, of wooden construction, in charge of Conductor Purcell and Motorman Griffin. Upon arriving at Granite, the regular meeting point with train No. 5, 2.81 miles south of Nameoki, the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 51, Form 19, which incorrectly read as follows:

"No. 8 ntr 39 meet No 5 ntr 35 at Mitchell instead of Canal."

Train No. 8 departed from Granite at 9.26 a. m., 23 minutes late, left Nameoki at about 9.35 a. m., and had proceeded northward about 1,300 feet when it collided with train No. 5.

The front ends of both cars were crushed and badly damaged, but the cars remained upright with only the lead truck of car 35 derailed. The employees killed were the two motormen, and the conductor of train No. 5.

#### Summary of evidence

Dispatcher Corey said he gave train order No. 51 to Operator Foreman at Hartford and to Operator Bower at Granite. Operator Bower, however, understood that the meeting point was being changed from Canal to Mitchell instead of from Granite to Mitchell, and although the order was repeated the error was not discovered. Operator Bower said the crew of train No. 8, however, noted the error in the order, but as Granite was their time-table meeting point with train No. 5 they understood that they were to meet that train at Mitchell instead of at Granite. Dispatcher Corey said Operator Foreman reported the arrival of train No. 5 at Hartford, that he instructed the operator to clear the train with the order, and that all he had to see was that the operator delivered the order was the operator's word to that effect.

Operator Foreman, on duty at Hartford, said he received train order No. 51 shortly before train No. 5 arrived.

When that train reached Hartford he reported it to the dispatcher and was told to clear it with train order No. 51, at 9.17 a. m., in the meantime the train had entered the siding to meet train No. 52 and the operator walked over to the train and delivered a copy of the order to the conductor and also to the motorman. Operator Foreman said the three of them stood there talking, that the conductor and motorman opened their orders and apparently read them, and after a few words relative to the weather he returned to his office. The record also indicated that Operator Foreman delivered a clearance card with the orders.

A train-order clip is provided on all motor cars and hangs on the window post to the left of the motorman, and there is a time-table rule which requires that a motorman shall fasten in this clip all orders affecting the movement of his train. The clip and attached orders for train No. 8 were found in the wreckage immediately after the accident. The clip that belonged to the motorman of train No. 5 was not found until some days afterwards, being discovered in some rubbish when the car was being cleaned at the shops; the clip was badly twisted and bent, and no orders were found attached to it.

The only surviving member of the crews involved was Conductor Purcell, of train No. 8, at the time of this investigation he was in a hospital and on account of his mental condition he was unable to make any statement relative to the occurrence of the accident.

The statements of two motormen who passed the point of accident shortly before its occurrence were to the effect that the fog in that vicinity was very dense, their range of vision being restricted to a distance of about 150 feet.

#### Conclusions

This accident probably was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Under the rules of this company, trains in either direction have no superior right over trains of the same class in the opposite direction beyond the time-table meeting point, and will meet trains as provided by the time-table unless otherwise ordered. Trains Nos. 5 and 8 were scheduled to meet at Granite and under the above-mentioned rule train No. 8, although superior by direction, could not proceed beyond Granite without authority, such authority was contained in train order No. 51 which provided for a meet with train No. 5 at Mitchell.

Under the rule just referred to, train No. 5 would have had a right to proceed to Granite unless otherwise ordered. Train order No. 51 took away its right to proceed to its time-table meeting point and required it to stop at Mitchell for train No. 8. Operator Foreman, on duty at Hartford, where the order

was put out to the crew of train No. 5, said he gave a copy of the order to the conductor and also to the motorman, but apparently he did not hear them read it. Afterwards the copies of this order which the operator said he issued to the crew of train No. 5 could not be located. There was no way of confirming the statement of Operator Foreman that he delivered the order in question, and, if delivered, it is not known whether the crew understood it correctly, although the copy of the order retained by the operator indicated that the order was written in a legible manner.

There is a further provision in the rules that all regular trains lose their time-table rights after they have become one hour late. Train No. 5 under its time-table schedule was due at Nameeki at 8.39 a. m., and it is possible that it was one hour late when the accident occurred, but definite information on this point was not obtained.

Had an adequate block-signal system been in use, this accident probably would not have occurred; an adequate automatic train stop or train control device would have prevented it.

The employees involved were experienced men; at the time of the accident they had been on duty between 4 and 5 hours, after 15 hours or more off duty.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BURLAND  
Director.