

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD AT LAKELAND,  
FLA., ON MARCH 29, 1919.

April 12, 1919.

On March 29, 1919, there was a side collision between a freight train and a light engine in the yard of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad at Lakeland, Fla., which resulted in the death of one employee. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety submits the following report.

The Jacksonville District of the Third Division is a single-track line extending from Jacksonville to Port Tampa. Coming into Lakeland from Port Tampa, there is a side track known as the Old Camp Track, the collision occurring at the switch connecting this side track with the main line. Approaching this point from either direction, the track is straight for a considerable distance and practically level. The switch stand is on the right side of the track approaching from the south. The weather was clear.

Northbound extra 959 consisted of 36 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 959, en route from Port Tampa to Gaines City, Fla., and was in charge of Conductor Miller and Engineman Walker. On coming into Lakeland, this train pulled in on the Old Camp Track in order to have some changes made in the make-up of the train. There were some cars standing on this track, and as a result extra 959 was brought to a stop with the 12 rear cars and caboose occupying the main line. On account of the switch stand being low, the switch light indicating

the position of the switch was obscured by these cars from the view of any train moving southward on the main track. About 10 minutes after extra 989 had been brought to a stop, the twelfth car from the rear of the train was struck by engine 809.

Engine 809 was in charge of Hostler, Hodges and Helpers Hole and Busbee. On account of being too large to be turned on the turn-table, it was being moved on the main track in order to be turned on a "Y." After entering on the main track, the engine was moved southward, backing up, for a distance of about 1650 feet until the right rear corner of the tender struck the train of extra 989 at the switch leading to the Old Camp track, the speed at the time being estimated to have been about 3 or 4 miles an hour.

None of the equipment was derailed, and only very slight damage resulted. The employee killed was helper Busbee, who was riding on the step on the right side of the rear of the tender and was caught between the corner of the tender and the gondola car with which it collided.

Hostler, Hodges stated that engine 809 was being backed down the main track at a speed of 3 or 4 miles an hour. He could not see the indication of the switch light, but said that the light at the derailing switch, located about 175 or 200 yards from the point of collision, was red. He had noticed the freight train on the Old Camp track, but did not see that a part of it was extending out on the main track until just before the collision occurred. He received no warning signal from Helper Busbee, but said that at about the time the collision

occurred Busbee apparently started to give him a signal with his lantern. Hostler Hodges said that he did not apply the brakes when passing the crossing 350 feet north of the switch, saying that he was looking for the switch light and that he also expected the helper on the rear of the tender to signal him if the track was not clear. He was familiar with the location of the tracks and switches, but did not realize that he was so close to the fouling point. The fact that he did not see any markers on the freight train did not indicate anything to him at the time, as he said he took it for granted that it was because the flagman had not put them up. The weather was fair but a little smoky, due to engines working in the yard, and he thought he could see about 20 or 30 car lengths.

Helper mole stated that he was riding on the pilot of engine 609. He thought the speed was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  or 4 miles an hour when the collision occurred, at which time he saw Helper Busbee start to make a motion with his lantern. The air was smoky and he could not see that the cars were occupying the main track, but thought Helper Busbee should have seen them in view of the fact that he was riding on the rear of the tender.

Superintendent Council stated that he had examined Helper Hodges on the book of rules before he was authorized to act as hostler and that he passed a very fair examination. None of the members of the crew of extra 959 knew anything about the accident until after it had occurred.

This accident was caused by the failure of Hostler Hodges to operate engine 609 under such control as to be able

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to stop unless the main track was seen or known to be clear, as required by that part of time table rule No. 15 quoted below, and also by rule No. 95 of the operating rules, which is also quoted:

15. Within Yard limits, engines have the right to work without special orders. Main track can be used protecting against third and fourth class trains. They must keep five minutes off the time of first-class trains, run carefully and look out for extra trains.

Third and fourth class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

95. Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against third and fourth-class trains.

Third and fourth-class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

Hestler Hodges stated that he knew the crossing was near the switch, and knowing that there was a train on the side track and that he could not see either the markers of that train or the switch light, it should have occurred to him that possibly that train might extend out on the main line. Under these circumstances, he should not have depended on receiving a stop signal from Helper Busbee, but should have so operated his engine as to have enabled him to bring it to a stop within his range of vision.

Hestler Hodges was employed on February 27, 1919, and on March 18, was transferred to the position of hostler. Previous to this, he had had about 7 years experience as a hostler, foreman and fireman on other railroads. Helpers Hole and Busbee entered the service as hostlers' helpers on March 18, 1919. At the time of the accident, all of these employees had been on duty nearly 6 hours after a period of 16 hours off duty.

G.V.L.