

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

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REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD NEAR KANAWHA, W. VA., ON AUGUST 13, 1922.

August 26, 1922.

To the Commission:

On August 13, 1922, there was a collision on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad between a freight train and freight cars standing on a siding near Kanawha, W. Va., resulting in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 2 employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on the Parkersburg Sub-Division of the Monongah Division extending between Grafton and Parkersburg, W. Va., a distance of 103.1 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 approximately one mile west of Kanawha, at a switch which leads off the main track to the south to what is known as the Stillwell Tie Hoist siding; approaching this point from the east there are 2,768 feet of tangent, while the grade is practically level. The switch-stand is located on the fireman's side of a westbound train, and the switch is a facing-point switch for westbound trains. The view of the switch-points, and the targets on the switch-stand, were obscured to some extent on account of the glare from the setting sun. There is a highway crossing over this siding about 250 feet from the switch, at the time of the accident one freight car stood immediately east of this crossing, and a cut of freight cars stood immediately west of it. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 6.33 p.m.

Description.

Westbound freight train extra 2543 consisted of 24 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2543, and was in charge of Conductor Farnsworth and Engineman Eskey. This train passed Kanawha at 6.30 p.m., and after having proceeded

about one mile, entered the Stillwell Tie Hoist siding, and while traveling at a speed of about 25 miles an hour knocked the single freight car off the track and collided with the cut of standing freight cars.

Engine 2543 was not derailed or materially damaged, the third, fourth, and fifth cars in this train were derailed and slightly damaged. The single freight car standing on the siding was completely demolished, while the first car in the cut of standing freight cars was telescoped a distance of about 4 feet by engine 2543, the remaining cars being shoved ahead with such force as to buckle the fifth car, which came to rest across the siding. The employee killed was the engineman.

#### Summary of evidence.

Between Kanawha and the Stillwell Tie Hoist siding, Head Brakeman Tibb was riding on the fireman's seat box of engine 2543, looking back along the train for overheated journals, and Fireman Grant was busy putting in a fire. When about 2 or 3 car lengths away, Head Brakeman Tibb gave warning of the open switch; Engineman Eskey immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, and jumped just before the accident occurred. Head Brakeman Tibb stated the sun formed a background for the switch-target at the time of the accident, and for that reason Engineman Eskey may have been unable to ascertain the indication for any considerable distance, on account of the glare.

Conductor Farnsworth was standing in the caboose talking with one of the brakemen when he felt the air brakes applied in emergency, followed shortly afterward by the shock of the collision which knocked him down. The conductor and two brakemen went forward and found that the switch had been opened and set for the siding; the switch lock had evidently been pounded with a stone to open it as they found a stone which plainly showed that it had been used for that purpose. The lock was missing but later was recovered and bore evidence of having been pounded with a stone.

Two boys, aged 7 and 11 years, who had been picking up coal along the railroad track, were seen in the vicinity of this switch a short time before the accident occurred. Upon being questioned, they admitted that they

had broken the switch lock, thrown the switch and thrown the lock away. They maintained that no one had told them to do it and were unable to offer any reason or excuse for their action. These boys were taken into custody by local authorities.

The air brakes on extra 2543 had been tested and were working properly.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by an open switch, due to mischievous tampering.

All of the employees of extra 2543 were experienced men; at the time of the accident they had been on duty less than 16 hours; after having been off duty 22 hours or more.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.