

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD AT KEARNEYSVILLE, W. VA., ON NOVEMBER 1, 1930.

November 18, 1930.

To the Commission.

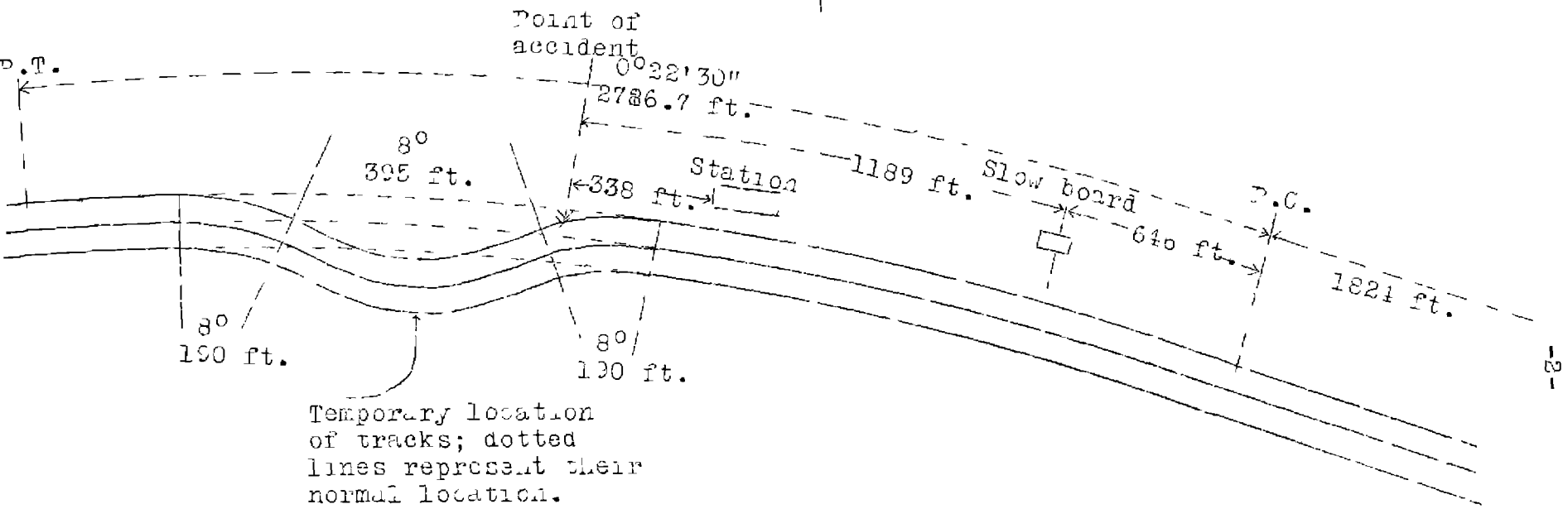
On November 1, 1930, there was a derailment of an express train on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad at Kearneysville, W.Va., which resulted in the death of two employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Cumberland Division extending between Weverton and Cumberland, a distance of 99.5 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a three-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and an automatic block-signal system. The tracks are numbered, from north to south, 1, 2, and 4, the accident occurring on track 1, at a point 338 feet west of the station at Kearneysville. Approaching this point from the east, under normal conditions, the track is tangent for a distance of 1,824 feet, followed by a $6^{\circ} 22' 30''$ curve to the left 2,786.7 feet in length. Near the leaving end of this curve the tracks had been temporarily relocated, having been moved southward a maximum of 72 feet and for a distance of 975 feet, forming an 8° reverse curve, and the accident occurred on this curve at a point approximately 170 feet from its eastern end. The grade at the point of accident is 0.47 per cent descending for westbound trains.

There was a temporary standard slow board located on the north side of the tracks 999 feet from the beginning of the reverse curve and 1,189 feet east of the point of accident; this sign was equipped with a yellow light which was mounted on top of the staff, about 10 feet above the ground. The maximum speed permitted for passenger trains in the territory in which the accident occurred is 30 miles per hour, but in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident it was restricted to 15 miles per hour.

The track is laid with 100-pound rails, 33 feet in length, with an average of 18 ties to the rail-length, tie-plated, and is ballasted with crushed stone and cinders, the track is adequately maintained through the slow-speed territory.



Temporary location of tracks; dotted lines represent their normal location.

Env. No. 1675
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad
Kearneysville, W. Va.
November 1, 1930.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3.49 a.m.

Description

Westbound express train extra 5229 consisted of eight express cars and one coach, hauled by engine 5229, and was in charge of Conductor Faith and Engineman Pickett. This train departed from Baltimore at 1.43 a.m., moved via the Baltimore Division to Washington, D.C., and thence to Weverton, where it reached the Cumberland Division tracks, passed Hobbs, the last open office, 1.7 miles east of Kearneysville, at 5.47 a.m., and was derailed upon encountering the temporary track at Kearneysville while traveling at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour.

The engine and tender came to rest on their right sides, lying on tracks 1 and 2, with the forward end of the engine 306 feet beyond the first marks of derailment. The first eight cars and the forward track of the ninth car were also derailed, the first two cars coming to rest approximately 100 feet beyond the engine, the third, fourth and fifth cars stopped on the south side of the track nearly opposite the engine, the sixth car stood immediately behind the tender and was crosswise of the tracks, and the seventh, eighth, and ninth cars remained in line with the track, although the seventh car was partly overturned. The first two cars were demolished and the balance of the derailed equipment was more or less damaged. The employees killed were the engineman and the fireman.

Summary of evidence

Conductor Faith stated that after reporting for duty at Baltimore, he read the general orders on the bulletin board, including Cumberland Division general order No. 174, which restricted the speed on track 1 to 15 miles per hour between Kearneysville and Trumbos Crossing due to the track having been moved southward to a new location between these points. Upon receiving a clearance card, and a message to proceed westward via Washington, he proceeded to the express yard, and compared time and read the message to the engineman. After an air-brake test had been made and the brakes reported operative, the train departed, a running test was made after leaving, and in making two stops en route the brakes functioned properly. He said the train was traveling at a speed of between 30 and 35 miles per hour as it approached the point of accident, and having the general order in mind, he was momentarily expecting an application of the brakes. As soon as he realized that the speed apparently was not going to be reduced, he left his seat in the rear of the coach and was about to pull the signal cord calling for brakes, but the accident occurred before he could do so. He did not hear the whistle sounded after passing Hobbs, neither did he feel an application of the brakes after passing that point. Conductor

Faith also stated that he was not acquainted with Engineman Pickett, but the latter appeared to be in normal condition when the message was read to him at Baltimore. He did not inquire of the engineman as to whether he knew the road or had read the general orders in effect, but assumed that he had done so. He was also unaware that the engineman had operated trains very infrequently on the Cumberland Division, as to his knowledge this was the first time he had had this particular engineman. Conductor Faith was familiar with the rule which requires that when a train is running at a higher rate of speed than allowed, the conductor will notify the engineman by the proper communicating signal, and said that he would have taken such action sooner than he did but for the fact that on account of the scarcity of land marks in that locality, he did not know the train was so close to the section of track on which the accident occurred.

Flagman Maddox corroborated the statements of Conductor Faith as to the operation of the train prior to the accident except that he estimated the speed while passing Hobbs at between 40 and 45 miles per hour, and at 30 or 35 miles per hour at the time of the accident, he felt no application of the brakes between these points, but did feel the slack bunch, which indicated to him that the engineman had shut off steam. After calling the board clear at Hobbs, Flagman Maddox entered the lavatory and upon returning, he was about to sit down when he observed the conductor reach for the signal or emergency cord, the crash occurring at the same time. Immediately after the accident he went back to protect and proceeded as far as Hobbs. When he was in the vicinity of the eastbound distant signal, located 2,815 feet east of the slow board, he could see the yellow light on the slow board. He said that he had not seen general order No. 174, but was familiar with the construction work in progress at Kearneysville and knew that tracks 4 and 3 had been re-located and was of the opinion that track 1 had also been moved.

Night Track Watchman Buhman stated that his duty was to inspect the tracks at Kearneysville highway underpass after each train had passed that point. About 20 minutes before the accident occurred, after a preceding westbound train had passed, he checked track 1 at every joint and every center, using a level board for the purpose; he found a maximum superelevation of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches on the curve on which the accident occurred, and said that the track was safe for the speed allowed, 15 miles per hour. He did not hear the whistle sounded while extra 5229 was approaching, and could not say whether the headlight was burning as he did not see the train prior to the accident. He immediately notified the operator at Martinsburg as to what had occurred and then proceeded to the engine, and as soon as the escaping steam died down he assisted in removing the engineman and firemen, who were still alive, but he said they made no statements concerning the accident. He described the

weather as clear, dark, and frosty.

Relief Crew Dispatcher West stated that he called Engineman Pickett at 11.15 p.m., October 31, to operate extra 5229 to Cumberland and the engineman acknowledged the call. He arrived at the office about 12.25 a.m., November 1, and proceeded to change his clothes. Crew Dispatcher West offered him a partly filled out time slip, but instead of accepting it, the engineman requested him to complete it and to insert the last Baltimore Division general order, which was No. 148, but did not mention any Cumberland Division general orders. Crew Dispatcher West prepared the slip as directed, including the signature of the engineman, and the engineman left the office about 12.32 a.m., which was the last time he saw him. He was acquainted with Engineman Pickett and while in the office he appeared to be normal in every respect.

Crew Dispatcher Sullivan stated that he was in the office during the time Engineman Pickett was present, and that he heard the engineman request Dispatcher West to insert general order No. 148 on the time slip, he did not hear any other conversation, as he was using the telephone. He said the bulletin boards are not visible from the enclosure in which the crew dispatcher is located and, therefore, he did not know whether Engineman Pickett read the general orders posted.

Crew Dispatcher Cagle stated that his period of duty is from 4 p.m. to midnight, and that he heard Dispatcher West call Engineman Pickett by telephone to report for duty at 12.40 a.m. He departed from the office at 12.15 a.m., and at that time the engineman had not yet arrived. He further stated that during the past six months he had only called Engineman Pickett twice for Cumberland runs, as his regular assignment was as a fireman on the Washington branch, and that the records in his office showed that Engineman Pickett did not sign for Cumberland Division general order No. 174 before departing on the trip on which the accident occurred.

General order No. 174, of the Cumberland Division, dated October 27, 1930, read as follows:

"Effective one-one, 1.01 P.M., Monday, October 27, 1930, No. one (1) track between Kearneysville station and Trumps Crossing will be thrown south to new location. Reduce speed to fifteen (15) miles per hour on No. one (1) track over new location."

Superintendent Laughlin, of the Cumberland Division, said this general order was posted on the general order board, and pasted in the general order book at Riverside, Baltimore, Md., at 9.15 a.m., October 28, by G.R. McKeldin, Crew Dispatcher.

Train Master Groves, of the Cumberland Division, stated that a check of general order boards on the Cumberland and Baltimore Divisions developed that Engineman Pickett had not signed for Cumberland Division general orders Nos. 172, issued October 21, 1930, 173, issued October 23, and 174, issued October 27, pertaining to track changes and slow orders at Kearneysville, prior to his departure from Baltimore on passenger extra 5229 on November 1, 1930.

Master Mechanic Mewshaw stated that he arrived at the scene of accident about 3.18 a.m., and after making a thorough inspection of the equipment involved he was confident there was nothing about this equipment that could have contributed to the cause of the accident. The engine speed-recorder tape was damaged and rendered illegible.

Engineman Schroder stated that he was intimately acquainted with Engineman Pickett and considered him a man of good reputation, with personal habits beyond reproach. He said that about October 24, Engineman Pickett inquired of him as to the location of Trumps Crossing, and he explained where it was located, and believed that Engineman Pickett understood him thoroughly. He was not certain why this inquiry was made, but was of the opinion that Engineman Pickett was familiar with the first general order, requiring reduced speed at Kearneysville, and was trying to keep posted so that he would be qualified to run over that territory. In addition to the warning signal on the slow board, which could be seen from a westbound train for a distance of about one-half mile, there are numerous land marks, and he did not consider that a man who was familiar with that locality could become lost as to his location. There were no glaring lights in the vicinity of the point of accident that would attract the attention of an approaching engineman to the construction work being done at that point.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the operation of extra 5229 at excessive speed over temporary track.

In view of the fact that both the engineman and fireman were killed as a result of the accident, it is not known what occurred on the engine immediately prior to the accident. According to the statements of persons who came in contact with the engineman at Baltimore, he appeared to be in normal condition, and the members of the train crew stated that he handled the train properly until after passing Fobbs, and that he then failed to reduce the speed of his train in accordance with general order No. 174, which restricted speed to 15 miles per hour for all trains on track 1 through the territory in which the accident occurred. On the other hand, however, it appeared that this order was placed on the bulletin board at Baltimore, at which point Engineman Pickett went on duty, on October 28, 1930, and that he went out on his run without signing for this or

the two preceding Cumberland Division general orders. While it is apparent that he either failed to read this order, or else forgot it, there was a yellow light mounted on a slow sign on the engineman's side of the track some distance east of the point of accident which should have given him warning that some unusual condition existed ahead, and he should have reduced speed accordingly, regardless of whether or not he was familiar with the requirements of general order No. 174.

The rules provide that general order boards and general notice boards will be provided at stations designated by time-table, and that conductors and enginemen shall consult these boards before starting on a trip, and shall sign for general orders. Not only did the records indicate that Engineman Pickett had failed to sign for the last three general orders, but it also appeared that no one was charged with the duty of knowing definitely that enginemen read these orders. In the interests of safety, immediate steps should be taken to correct this situation, and to insure that enginemen are fully qualified to operate in the particular territory for which they are called.

All of the employees involved were experienced men, and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.