

## 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 AT NOBLE, ILL., ON JANUARY 31, 1922.

February 18, 1922.

To the Commission:

On January 31, 1922, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad at Noble, Ill., which resulted in the death of 2 employees, and the injury of 3 passengers, 2 express messengers and 4 employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on that part of the St. Louis Division extending between Washington, Ind., and St. Louis, Mo., and in the vicinity of the point of accident is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred at a point about 2,700 feet east of the west passing-track switch, or 2,200 feet west of the east switch. Approaching this point from the west, the track is tangent for a distance of about 7,200 feet on a slightly ascending grade; approaching from the east the track is tangent and practically level for half a mile or more. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 10.12 p.m.

Description.

Westbound freight train extra 2500 consisted of 23 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2500, and was in charge of Conductor Hollis and Engineman Chattin. At Olney, 7.7 miles east of Noble and the last open office, the crew received a copy of train order No. 49, providing for a meet with train No. 62 at Noble, train No. 62 to take siding. Extra 2500 left Olney, according to the train sheet, at 9.51 p.m., and on its arrival at Noble was proceeding on the main track toward the west passing-track switch when it collided with train No. 62.

Eastbound passenger train No. 62 consisted of 1 express car, 1 combination baggage and milk car, 1 smoking car and 1 coach, hauled by engine 1468, and was in charge of Conductor Smith and Engineman Sralley. The first two cars were of wooden construction, the third had a steel underframe, while the coach was of all-steel construction. After receiving a copy of train order No. 49 at Flora, 14.5 miles west of Noble, train No. 62 left that point, according to the train sheet, at 9.50 p.m., on time, and at Clay City, 7.1 miles west of Noble, the operator delivered a copy of a clearance card, form A, with part B filled in to call attention to the meet with extra 2500 at Noble, which at that hour of the night is what is known as a closed block siding. Train No. 62 left Clay City, according to the train sheet, at 10.04 p.m., 3 minutes late, passed the west passing-track switch where it should have taken siding in accordance with the requirements of train order No. 49, and collided with extra 2500 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 40 miles an hour.

Both engines were considerably damaged and the express car was telescoped, while the second car of the freight train was demolished, slight damage was sustained by several other cars. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman of train No. 62.

#### Summary of evidence.

The statements of Engineman Chattin, of extra 2500, were to the effect that he dimmed the headlight of his engine when in the vicinity of a road crossing near the east switch so that the engineman of the opposing train would have no difficulty in locating the west switch. When about a block west of the station, or approximately 300 feet from the point of collision, he realized that possibly train No. 62 was on the main track, turned the headlight on fully, just after which he made an emergency application of the air brakes. He thought the speed of his train at this time was about 15 miles an hour, and that it had not been reduced materially before the collision occurred. His statements were practically corroborated by those of Fireman Branaman, as well as by those of Head Brakeman Pride, who was also riding on the engine.

Baggageman Slover, of train No. 62, was sweeping the floor of the baggage car when he noticed that the train had passed the west switch and was continuing on the main track at a speed of 40 or 45 miles an hour. Having been told by Flagman Cottam, who was in the baggage car, that their train was to take siding at Noble for the purpose of meeting the extra, he told the flagman that the train had passed the switch. Neither he nor the flagman knew whether or not the engine was using steam at the time, neither did they feel any

application of the air brakes or notice any material reduction in speed. Flagman Cottam also said he heard the engineman sound two long and one short blasts on the whistle when approaching Noble, apparently in answer to a meeting-point signal given by the conductor on the air whistle, and when the baggageman said the train had passed the west switch, he attempted to reach the emergency cord for the purpose of applying the air brakes, but the collision occurred before he could do so.

Conductor Smith said Engineman Smalley read train order No. 49 at Flora and commented on the fact that they were to take siding for extra 2500, and said that the fireman stopped what he was doing and apparently listened to the reading of the order. When the train was rounding the curve about 1 mile west of the west switch, at a speed of 50 or 55 miles an hour, he sounded the meeting-point signal on the air whistle and distinctly heard the engineman acknowledge the whistle with two long and one short blasts of the steam whistle. Conductor Smith said he was then in the rear car and that after getting his lantern from the front end of the car walked back to the rear vestibule, saw the switch light and also the dimmed headlight and classification lights of the extra. By this time the speed had been reduced, but was then about 35 or 40 miles an hour, with the engine close to the switch, and realizing that the train was not going to stop at the switch he pulled the whistle cord twice and then applied the air brakes from the tail hose, but found that the air was gone and about this time he was knocked against the end of the car. Baggageman Slover and Flagman Cottam said Engineman Smalley was in the habit of approaching stations at a high rate of speed and that occasionally he would run by the stopping point, which statement was substantially corroborated by Conductor Smith, who added that in the period of 20 days or so that Engineman Smalley had been on this run he thought that the engineman had been doing very well in learning the land marks. Conductor Smith also said that Engineman Smalley seemed to be in normal physical condition when he talked with him at Flora.

Road Foreman of Engines Creager stated that on his arrival at the scene of the accident at about 1.15 a.m., February 1, he examined engine 1468 and found the reverse lever in forward motion, brake-valve handle broken off, and throttle closed, while the cut-out cock was in the open position. Master Mechanic Herliky verified the statement of the road foreman, adding that the throttle had been bent in the center and that if it had not been closed at the time of the accident the object which caused it to bend probably would have forced it forward into the closed position. The brake-valve handle was not recovered, but examination of what remained indicated that the handle probably had been in the emergency position when it was broken.

### Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of train No. 62 to be brought to a stop and headed in on the passing track as required by the train order establishing the meeting point with extra 2500.

The evidence indicates that Engineman Smalley must have been awake and in full possession of his faculties when a short distance from Noble, as he acknowledged the meeting-point whistle signal sounded by the conductor. It also appears that the headlight and classification lights on extra 2500 were burning properly, also the switch light, that the night was clear and that the view of Engineman Smalley was in no way obstructed for a distance of more than 1 mile approaching the point of accident. In view of these facts, it is impossible to say definitely why he failed to stop his train at the west passing-track switch. It is possible that the dimming of the headlight by the engineman of extra 2500 caused him to think the opposing train was on the passing track and that his own train could proceed on the main track, not realizing the danger until the engineman of extra 2500 turned the headlight on fully shortly before the accident occurred.

The crew of train No. 62 had been on duty about 4½ hours, previous to which the engineman had been off duty 31 hours, while none of the other members of the crew had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law. The crew of extra 2500 had been on duty about 3 hours, after about 39 hours off duty.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.