

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD AT WOODSVILLE, N. H , ON
DECEMBER 3, 1931.

January 26, 1932

To the Commission

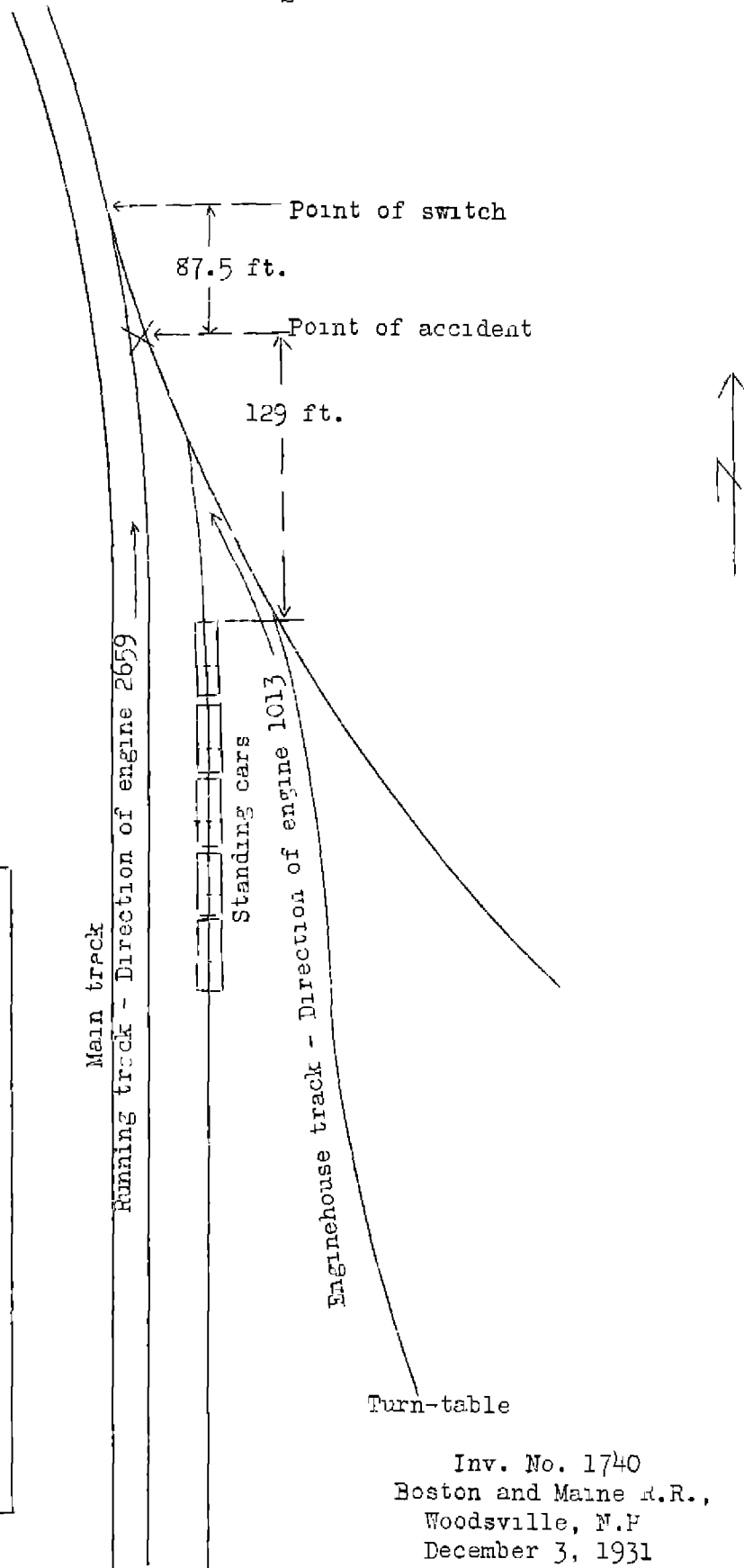
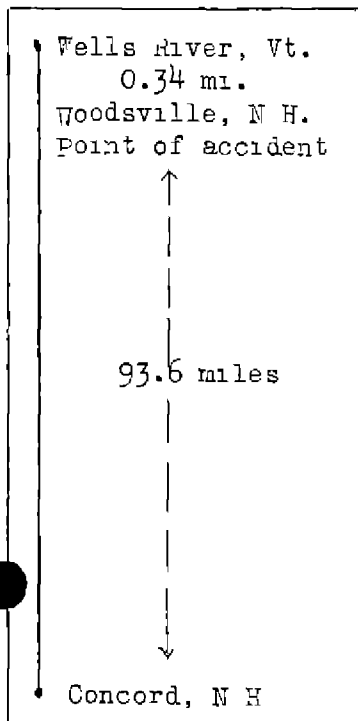
On December 3, 1931, there was a side collision between two light engines on the Boston and Maine Railroad at Woodsville, N. H , which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of four employees. The investigation of this accident was made in conjunction with a representative of the Public Service Commission of New Hampshire.

Location and method of operation,

This accident occurred on the New Hampshire Division, within the limits of Woodsville yard, at a point where the lead track from the enginehouse joins a running track which parallels the main track on the east. This running track was formerly the northbound main track, but on November 24, 1931, it was changed to a yard track, at which time the interlocking plant at Woodsville was discontinued, and it was further provided that engine movements in and out of the enginehouse would be made through the north switch, except when going to the freight yard, located south of the engine house. The accident occurred at a point about 87.5 feet south of the switch at the junction of the lead and running tracks, or about 2,900 feet south of the passenger station. Approaching the point of accident on the running track from the south, there is a slight curve to the left approximating 1° for a distance of 560 feet to the point of accident. The grade for northbound trains on this track is 1.103 per cent ascending at the point of accident. The track extending from the engine house is on a curve to the left where it meets the lead track, and the latter track is practically straight up to its junction with the running track.

The lamp of the switch involved is approximately 6 feet 6 inches above the ties, and shows a green indication for movements on the running track and a yellow indication for movements on the lead track.

At the time of the accident five loaded coal cars were standing on a track between the running track and the enginehouse track, obscuring the view had by the engine crews



Inv. No. 1740
Boston and Maine R.R.,
Woodsville, N.H.
December 3, 1931

of engines approaching northbound on the engine-house track as well as on the running track, the north end of this cut of cars was 125 feet south of the approximate point of accident.

The weather was clear and it was practically daylight at the time of the accident, which occurred at 6.35 a.m.

Description

Passenger engine 1013, headed south, was in charge of Engineman Buckley and Fireman Webster. It departed from the turn-table at the engine house at 6.30 a.m., on the engine house track and was backing up en route to the passenger station via the running track to pick up the cars which were to make up train No. 10. Engine 1013 had reached a point 87.5 feet south of the switch, or beyond the fouling point, and had been brought practically to a stop when it was struck by light engine 2659

Freight engine 2659, en route from White River Junction to Newport, Vt, hauling freight train BU-1, in charge of Conductor Gerry and Engineman Young, arrived at Wells River, Vt, located approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of Woodsville, at 6.12 a.m. At this point 21 cars destined to Woodsville were detached from the train and moved southward to the Woodsville freight yard, a distance of approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. After setting out the cars in the yard, engine 2659 backed northward on the running track en route to Wells River to resume its run to Newport. Fireman Durgin operated the engine, while Engineman Young performed the duties of fireman, and while this backup movement was being made engine 2659 collided with engine 1013 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been 8 or 10 miles per hour

The tender of engine 2659 struck engine 1013 approximately at the front driving wheel, resulting in engine 1013 turning over on its left side and engine 2659 on its right side, with the front end of engine 1013 about 8 or 10 feet south of the front end of engine 2659. The employee killed was the engineman of engine 1013, and those injured were the fireman of engine 1013 and the engineman, head brakeman and flagman of engine 2659

Summary of evidence

Fireman Webster, of engine 1013, stated that after leaving the turn-table at the engine house he was busy sweeping the engine deck and had just stepped into the gangway on his side of the cab, preparatory to getting off for the purpose of throwing the switch to allow his engine to pass out on the running track, when the collision occurred. He jumped off and as he climbed up the bank he saw his engine turn

over. After the accident Fireman Webster saw that the switch lamp displayed a green indication, with the switch lined for a movement on the running track, and he also found the throttle on his engine closed and the independent brake applied, on this latter point he further stated that the brake was in good operating condition and that no trouble had been experienced when a stop was made on the turn-table. After leaving the turn-table the engine had attained a speed of about 8 or 10 miles per hour, but he thought that it had practically stopped at the time of the collision. He did not hear engine 2659 approaching, neither did he hear the engine bell ringing or a whistle signal sounded. The headlight and cab lights on his own engine were burning when they departed from the engine house, but he was unable to say whether or not Engineman Buckley had turned them off after that time. It was daybreak at the time of the accident and the visibility was such that hand signals could be seen. Engineman Buckley appeared to be in normal condition on the morning of the accident and had always been very careful about fouling adjoining tracks, and Fireman Webster said that he had not realized that their engine was fouling the running track. While he did not look directly at Engineman Buckley when approaching the point of accident, he was under the impression that the engineman was sitting on his seat with his back to the window, facing the fireman's side of the cab and looking over his left shoulder in the direction the engine was traveling.

Fireman Durgin, of engine 2659, a qualified engineman, was operating engine 2659 on his back-up movement from Woods-ville yard en route to Wells River. He was leaning from the cab window and could see the green indication of the switch lamp until the engine was about two car-lengths from it, after which it was obscured by the tender. He was working steam slightly and the engine was traveling at a speed of about 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred, he immediately shut off the throttle and applied the air brakes with the independent brake valve. A crossing whistle signal had been sounded by him at an underpass located about 1,100 feet south of the point of accident, and the bell was ringing, the headlight on his engine was burning, but the back-up light on the rear of the tender was not burning at the time of the accident, as it was daylight and he did not think it was necessary. Fireman Durgin further stated that he did not see any indication of an engine approaching on the lead track. A test made later showed that with an engine backing up on the running track, the switch lamp was obstructed by the tender of the engine at a point 444.6 feet south of the switch.

Engineman Young, of engine 2659, stated that he had been attending to the fire during this back-up movement and had just seated himself on the fireman's seatbox when he

caught a glimpse of engine 1013 and at the same time the tender of his engine started to rise, following which the engine turned over. He estimated the speed of his engine to have been 8 or 9 miles per hour at the time of the accident. Engineman Young further stated that the bell was ringing all the way through the yard, the whistle signal sounded for a crossing north of the point of accident, and that the visibility was good at the time of the accident.

Head Brakeman Spencer, of engine 2659, stated that during the back-up movement he was riding on the fireman's seatbox looking back over the track until just before the collision occurred, when he gave his seat to Engineman Young; he then stood near the fireman's seatbox and at no time did he make any observation of the switch ahead nor did he see engine 1013 approaching. He further stated that while it was not daylight, it was fairly light and he thought hand signals could have been seen. He estimated the speed of his engine at the time of the accident to have been 10 miles per hour.

Flagman Wells, of engine 2659, stated that approaching the point of accident he was standing facing the engineman's side of the cab and at no time was he in position to observe the switch ahead. He further stated the whistle signal was sounded for the crossing located north of the point of accident, and he estimated the speed of his engine to have been 10 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Operator Mann, whose home is located about 40 feet from the point of accident, stated that his attention was attracted by the noise of the collision and upon looking out of the window he saw steam escaping from the engines and at that time it was dusk and not sufficiently light so that hand signals could be seen.

General Foreman Wood stated that he arrived at the scene of the accident about 20 minutes after its occurrence and upon examining the engines he found the independent brake valve applied on engine 1013 and the automatic brake valve in full release position, it being his opinion that the valve was thrown to this position by the body of the engineman when he was thrown to the fireman's side of the cab as the engine turned over. There were no lights burning on this engine but he thought they might have been put out as a result of the accident. The lights on engine 2659 were burning, the independent brake valve was applied and the automatic brake valve was in running position.

Laborer Guyette, who operated the turn-table for engine 1013 prior to its departure from the engine house, stated that the headlight and cab lights were burning at the time the engine departed. His statement was corroborated by the

statement of Machinist Seigny Machinist Seigny further stated that he inspected the air brakes before engine 1013 departed from the engine house and they were in good condition.

Crew Dispatcher Johnson stated that he talked with Engineman Buckley at the time he came to the engine house and he appeared in good spirits and excellent health. The record of physical examinations of Engineman Buckley showed that he had had 18 examinations from January 1, 1929, to September 27, 1931, and Superintendent Perkins stated that the chief surgeon felt that frequent examinations were necessary as Engineman Buckley had heart trouble. Engineman Buckley had been restricted from all service on March 29, 1930, which restriction was removed on May 7, 1930. He was again restricted from all duty in engine service on September 30, 1930, and on October 6, 1930, he was re-examined and approved for local freight and yard service until February 7, 1931, when he was approved for local passenger and local freight service, and since that time no additional restrictions had been placed upon him, the last examination having been made on September 27, 1931, as a result of which he was approved for service until January 1, 1932, under the same restrictions.

Trainmaster Thomas stated that Bulletin No. 144 covering the movements from the engine house, effective November 24, 1931, was posted on the bulletin boards on November 18, and that Engineman Buckley had made this movement as prescribed in the bulletin every day that he was on duty since it became effective on November 24.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Buckley, of engine 1013, to stop his engine clear of the fouling point of the running track; a contributing factor was the failure of any one on engine 2659 to maintain a proper lookout on the side from which engine 1013 was approaching.

No explanation can be made as to why Engineman Buckley did not stop his engine clear of the switch, as he was killed in the accident. While his view of an engine approaching on the running track was considerably obscured by the cars standing on an intervening track, there was a distance of 129 feet between those cars and the point of accident, and there did not appear to have been any reason why Engineman Buckley could not have stopped clear of the running track until the switch had been properly lined for the movement of his engine and he had ascertained that the route was clear.

The evidence indicates that engine 2659 was traveling at a speed of 10 miles per hour and that Fireman Durgin, who was operating the engine at the time of the accident, was maintaining a lookout from the engineman's side, a test made after the occurrence of the accident, however, showed that the switch lamp disappeared from his view, even though he had his head out of the cab window, when he was 444.6 feet south of the switch, due to the curvature and the fact that the engine was being operated backing up, and that he had no view of an engine closely approaching the switch from the engine-house lead. While the cars on the adjacent track obstructed the view from the opposite side of the cab, the statements of the other three members of the crew of engine 2659 indicated that no effort was made by any one of them to look out on that side and see whether the track ahead was clear. They were aware of the bulletin instructions requiring engines to leave the engine house via the switch which they were approaching, in fact, it was the only switch in the immediate vicinity which they had to watch, and had a proper lookout been maintained from that side of the engine, there is no doubt but that warning could have been given Fireman Durgin in time to enable him to stop.

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.