

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY
IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH
OCCURRED ON THE CHICAGO & ALTON RAILROAD
AT DOOTH, MO., ON DECEMBER 20, 1925.

January 30, 1926.

To the Commission:

On December 20, 1925, there was a side collision between two portions of the same train on the Chicago & Alton Railroad at Dooth, Mo., resulting in the death of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on Subdivision 2 of the Western Division, which extends between Dooth and Slater, Mo., a distance of 105.7 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 an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred in the yard at Dooth, at the western end of yard track 1, where this track connects with the lead track, this point is approximately 2,900 feet west of the telegraph office. Track 1 parallels the main track on the north and connects with that track at a point about 1,100 feet west of the point of accident. The lead track connects with track 1 and leads off to the north to various yard tracks, the roundhouse, etc. The grade of the lead track is practically level while on track 1, the grade is 0.175 per cent descending westward.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 1.05 a.m.

Description

Westbound freight train extra 339-807 consisted of 43 cars and a caboose, hauled by engines 339 and 807, and was in charge of Conductor Turner and Enginemen Toohy and Steehman. Upon arriving at Dooth it entered upon yard track 1 at the east switch, moved westward on that track and was brought to a stop at a point a few car-lengths distant east of the lead-track switch. On account of the fact that the train was then blocking a highway crossing the head car was uncoupled from the train and pulled ahead until it was clear of the crossing; the engines were

then uncoupled, moved westward to clear of the lead-track switch, and then started to make a back-up movement on the lead track. In the meantime, however, the first car, not having been properly secured, moved forward and cornered the two engines as they were backing in on the lead track.

The car struck and made a slight mark on the left cylinder of engine 807, scraped the side of the tender of engine 339, struck and tore away the left side of the cab of engine 339, and then tore the appurtenances from the side of the engine. Both engines, and their tenders, remained upright on the rails; the car, a steel gondola loaded with coal, was driven backward by the force of the collision and after the accident was found coupled to the train. The employee killed was the fireman of engine 339.

Summary of evidence.

Head Brakeman Sever said that when his train was brought to a stop near the west end of the yard at Dooth, the first car in the train was standing on a highway crossing and in order to clear this crossing he uncoupled this car and it was moved just west of the crossing. He then boarded the car and applied the hand brake, which appeared to hold properly, cut off the engines and they were moved ahead preparatory to backing in on the lead track switch. Brakeman Sever lined the switch for this movement and boarded the right rear tender sill-step of engine 807 as it passed him, backing in on the lead track. The engines had moved only a short distance when his attention was attracted by the brakes being applied on engine 807 and by a noise on the opposite side of the engines. Brakeman Sever further stated that at Louisiana, Mo., a station 12.8 miles east of Dooth, he had found the inside brake beam of the front truck to be down on the south side of the first car and with some assistance he had tied it up, using a release rod, and then had cut out the air brakes. After the accident he found this same brake beam down on the rails, the release rod having straightened out enough to permit the brake beam to come down again.

The statements of Engineman Toohy, of Engine 339, corroborated those of Brakeman Sever relative to the movements of their train at Dooth; he also stated that after the back-up movement was started toward the lead track the engines had moved about two car-lengths, at a speed of 4 or 5 miles an hour, when there was a scraping noise on the left side of the engine and then something struck his engine just back of the cab, carrying it forward and raking the steam pipes from the cab to the

cylinder. Engineman Stechman, of engine 807, stated that he could see the lantern of the head brakeman at all times while making the movement preparatory to backing in on the lead track. He had not seen the brakeman applying the hand brake on the car, although when he examined this car after the accident he found that the hand brake had been applied. His other statements agreed with those of Engineman Tochey's. Fireman Brock said he had been on the seat box from the time of arriving at Tooth until the two engines were cut off prior to backing in on the lead track; he then got down and was putting in a fire when the accident occurred.

Conductor Turner had gotten off as his train passed the telegraph office while Flagman Smith had started toward the head end of the train but had not reached that point at the time of the accident. Both of these employees immediately inspected the car involved and found the inside brake beam of the front truck to be down on the rail on the south side; the brake chain was wound around the brake shaft several times and the pawl secured in the ratchet wheel. The brake had been applied with such pressure as to necessitate the use of a shaker bar to release it.

Car Foreman Elliott said he examined the car several hours afterwards and at that time the brake beam had been wired up with a release rod. In his opinion the hand brake was in good serviceable condition.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by a car moving ahead and cornering two engines, due to the fact that it had not been properly secured.

While it appeared that trouble had been experienced with a brake beam coming down on the forward end of this car, Head Brakeman Sever knew of this condition and also knew that the air brake had been cut out. The fact that the car apparently started to move on a slight descending grade almost as soon as it had been cut off from the engines, and that afterwards it was driven backward a distance of about five car-lengths as a result of being struck by an engine moving at a speed of 4 or 5 miles an hour, indicates quite clearly that the hand brake was not properly holding the car. Had Brakeman Sever taken the precaution to secure this car before cutting off the engines, this accident would not have occurred.

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. DORLAND,

Director.