

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE CHICAGO & WESTERN INDIANA RAILROAD AT CHICAGO, ILL , ON JUNE 15, 1923.

July 17, 1923.

To the Commission:

On June 15, 1923, there was a rear-end collision between two Chesapeake & Ohio freight trains on the tracks of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad at Chicago, Ill , which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of four employees. This investigation was made in conjunction with a representative of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Location and method of operation

The Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad is a terminal company, its tracks being used by passenger and freight trains of various railroads entering Chicago and in making interchange deliveries to other railroads in the Chicago district. The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway is a tenant line and operates over the tracks of the terminal company between Hammond, Ind , and Chicago, Ill.; under special instructions contained in the time-table of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, trains are governed by the time-table and book of rules of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad between Hammond and Chicago.

The accident occurred on that part of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad extending between Dearborn Street Station Chicago, and South Hammond, Ind , a distance of 23.3 miles, over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use on the freight tracks of this line. Between 68th Street and Pullman Junction, a distance of approximately 11.8 miles, there are four tracks, two of which are used for passenger traffic and two tracks for freight traffic, but between 80th Street and State Street the passenger and freight tracks are not adjacent, so that the freight tracks in the vicinity of the point of accident form practically a double-track line. The tracks of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad are paralleled on the east by two tracks of the Belt Railway of Chicago, and on the west by the tracks of the Dalton branch of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad, so that the exact location of the rear of a train on any of these tracks, standing at Vincennes Avenue, the point of accident, can not be easily determined from an approaching train. All trains are required to stop at 80th Street, just north of Vincennes Avenue, and proceed only on hand signal.

Approaching the point of accident from the south, beginning at 87th Street, there is a tangent 1,400 feet in length, then a curve of 3° to the right, 1,100 feet in length, followed by a tangent 2,000 feet long, the accident occurring on the 3-degree curve about 250 feet from its northern end, the grade is 0.3 per cent ascending for about 1,400 feet to the point of accident. Solid concrete supports of an overhead bridge 1,560 feet south of the point of accident restrict the view until after the bridge is passed. The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 3.55 p.m.

Description.

Northbound Chesapeake & Ohio freight train extra 329 consisted of 48 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 329, and was in charge of Conductor Stewart and Engineman Patton. It arrived at the junction at 80th Street at 3.14 p. m., and while standing at this point, with its rear end just south of Vincennes Avenue, it was struck by extra 498.

Northbound Chesapeake & Ohio freight train extra 498 consisted of 11 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 498, and was in charge of Conductor Glessner and Engineman Hammond. This train left Pullman Junction, approximately 11.7 miles south of the point of accident, at 3.29 p. m., and struck the rear end of extra 329 while running at a speed estimated to have been about 30 miles an hour.

The caboose and the two rear cars of extra 329 were destroyed. Engine 498 came to rest to the left of the track on its side, badly damaged; the tender was also derailed and lay at right angles to and close against the boiler head, two cars of this train were also slightly damaged. The employee killed was the engineman of extra 498.

Summary of evidence.

Engineman Patton, of extra 329, said that after stopping his train at 80th Street, on account of a train ahead, he could see the caboose of his train and saw the flagman go back a distance of what appeared to be two or three car lengths, after which he paid no further attention to the flagman. He also said that he always approached this vicinity under control, prepared to stop, as it is not unusual to find a train waiting at the switches at this point.

Conductor Stewart, of extra 329, said that upon the arrival of his train at 80th Street he went ahead to attend to an overheated journal, but before leaving the caboose he instructed the flagman to protect the rear end, and he saw the flagman take a red flag and go back about 5 or 10 car lengths, from which point he said a clear view of the track could be had for about three-fourths of a mile. He was at about the middle of the train at the time of the collision, and did not see or hear extra 498 approaching.

Flagman Hart, of extra 329, said that when extra 329 stopped, Conductor Stewart started ahead, but before doing so instructed him to protect the rear of the train. He said he went back about 4 car lengths, from which point he saw extra 498 when it appeared at the overhead bridge, a distance of about 1,500 feet south of the point of accident. He at once started to give stop signals, at the same time proceeding southward, and had reached a point about 13 car lengths from the caboose, on the right side of the track, when engine 498 passed him, still working steam, and collided with the caboose of extra 329. After the collision Flagman Hart said that he was nearly opposite the caboose of extra 498.

Fireman Bosworth, of extra 498, said that shortly after leaving Pullman Junction he saw a Pennsylvania train running on a track parallel to that on which extra 329 was running; although the speed of the two trains was higher than customary, nothing was said and he did not know whether or not they were racing. He estimated the speed of the train approaching the overhead bridge south of the point of accident to have been about 25 or 30 miles an hour, and as he was riding on the outside of the curve he did not know of the train ahead until the brakes were applied and the engineman called to the other employees in the engine cab to "unload", the collision occurring immediately afterwards.

Conductor Glessner, of extra 498, who was riding on the engine, stated that after leaving Burnside, a station 0.8 of a mile north of Pullman Junction, there was a Pennsylvania freight train on the right, running parallel to extra 498, and although he did not consider that the two trains were racing, the engines were about opposite and running so fast that at 87th Street he stepped across the cab and told Engineman Hammond to slow down, as the speed of his train approaching the curve was such that he felt some uncertainty as to whether it could remain on the track, but all the engineman did was to turn and look at him. Shortly after passing the overhead bridge at 87th Street he looked ahead and saw a caboose around the curve and also a flagman, but was not able to say where the flagman stood with relation to the caboose. The caboose was about 15 car lengths distant, and he jumped when about 6 car lengths from the caboose, being temporarily stunned and sustaining minor injuries. When he regained consciousness he saw Flagman Hart approaching from the south. He stated that his train was moving at a speed of about 20 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

Flagman Pitman, of extra 498, stated that an air-brake test was made before leaving the yard at State Line, at which time all of the brakes were operative, and they also worked properly en route. He stated that he felt no brake application just prior to the collision.

The engineman of the Pennsylvania freight train which was running on the adjacent track said his train left the Illinois Central crossing at Burnside ahead of extra 498, and that he increased the speed to about 35 miles an hour by the time the overhead bridge south of the point of accident, was reached, he then made an air-brake application and was passed by extra 498. Just after passing the overhead bridge he saw the rear end of extra 329 and when not more than 10 or 15 car lengths from it saw a flagman get off the caboose. He stopped his train short of the point of accident, and as there was no obstruction to the view of the engineman of extra 498 he thought that engineman had the same opportunity of seeing the train ahead and stopping without colliding with it. The head brakeman of the Pennsylvania train was riding on the front end of the engine, and as extra 498 passed him he said he saw the fireman of his train giving signals to the engineman of extra 498, no attention being paid to these signals. The conductor of the Pennsylvania train, who was riding in the first car, said extra 498 overtook his train about 10 or 12 car lengths from the caboose of extra 329, at about this time he saw the flagman get off the caboose, and the conductor at once gave stop signals to the engineman of extra 498 and also called to him, but without results.

Section Foreman Sweeney, of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad, was on the Dalton Branch tracks, and said he saw the flagman of extra 329 about 200 feet south of the caboose, walking toward extra 498, giving stop signals. Agent Dusan, of the Belt Railway of Chicago, stationed at 87th Street, estimated the speed of extra 498 when passing his office to have been about 50 miles an hour.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Hammond, of extra 498, to maintain a proper lookout and to operate his train under proper control approaching a point at which all trains are required to stop.

The evidence clearly indicates that extra 498 was being operated at an unreasonable rate of speed, and it is believed Engineman Hammond was so fully occupied in racing with the Pennsylvania train that he neglected to maintain a proper lookout of the track ahead. The fireman, together with another employee not a member of the crew, was riding on the left side of the engine and could not see the track ahead on account of the curve. Conductor Glessner was in position to know the existing situation; he considered it sufficiently dangerous to tell the engineman to reduce speed, and the conditions were such that when the engineman failed to heed this warning he should have taken more effective steps toward bringing the train to a stop, at any rate after seeing the flagman and the train ahead. It appears that all the

conductor did was to tell the engineman to reduce speed, without there being any compliance on the part of the engineman or even any indication that he understood what the conductor had said. For his failure to take any efficient action, Conductor Glessner must share in the responsibility for the occurrence of this accident

The flagging rule of the Chicago & Western Indiana Railroad requires a flagman to go back a sufficient distance to insure full protection. While the exact location of the flagman when extra 498 approached is not clearly established in the testimony, it is apparent from his own testimony that he went back but a short distance, although he had about 41 minutes at his disposal. Had he gone back a distance of about 20 car lengths he would have been at the northern end of the straight track, and not only could he have been seen a much greater distance, but any difficulty in determining on which track he was flagging would have been eliminated.

All of the employees involved were experienced men. At the time of the accident the crew of extra 329 had been on duty about 4 hours, after about $16\frac{1}{2}$ hours off duty; the crew of extra 498 had been on duty about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, after from 16 to 18 hours off duty

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. Borland,

Director.