

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE CHICAGO GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY AT ST. JOSEPH, MO., ON AUGUST 6, 1925.

November 21, 1925.

To the Commission.

On August 6, 1925, there was a rear-end collision between a yard transfer and a freight train on the Chicago Great Western Railway at St. Joseph, Mo., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of three employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Seventh District on the Southern Division, extending between Conception, Mo., and Leavenworth, Kans., a distance of 74.2 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred within the yard limits of St. Joseph, at a point approximately one car length west of the east yard-limit board, approaching this point from the east the track is tangent for a considerable distance, this tangent extending for some distance beyond the point of accident. The grade is descending for westbound trains, varying from 0.11 to 0.92 per cent, being 0.43 per cent descending at the point of accident. In clear weather the view is unobstructed for a distance of 4,700 feet.

At the eastern end of St. Joseph yard there is a transfer track on the south side of the main track the switch leading to the transfer track being a facing-point switch for eastbound trains. The east yard-limit board is located on the north side of the main track and is 272 feet east of the clearance point between the main track and the transfer track.

There was a heavy rain falling at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8.30 a.m.

Description

Yard engine 486, headed east, in charge of Engine Foreman Saner and Engineman Ray, was engaged in making an interchange movement at the eastern end of St. Joseph yard. Twelve cars were left standing on the main track, the eastern end of this out being a few car lengths outside of the east yard-limit

board, while the switch engine placed five cars of gravel on the transfer track; engine 486 then returned, coupled to the west end of the 12 cars, and started to move westward. The rear end of the east car in the transfer had reached a point about one car-length inside of the east yard-limit board, traveling at a low rate of speed, when it was struck by train No. 61.

Westbound freight train No. 61 consisted of 22 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 346, and was in charge of Conductor Smith and Engineer McWaltz. This train left Conception, 37.2 miles from St. Joseph, at 6.35 a.m., one hour and five minutes late, and collided with the rear end of the yard transfer while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 5 and 25 miles an hour.

None of the equipment in either train was derailed, but the head car in the yard transfer was knocked off center at its forward end, the employee killed, a switchman, being caught between this end of the car and switch engine 486.

Summary of evidence

Yard engine 486 had pushed the five cars of gravel ahead of it as it moved eastward over the main track to the transfer track at the eastern end of the yard. There were 12 cars to be received from the transfer track, so the 5 cars were coupled to the 12 cars, and then the 17 cars were hauled out on the main track. The switch was then closed and the 17 cars were pushed eastward on the main track far enough to allow the engine to cut off the 5 cars of gravel and push them in on the transfer track; this resulted in the cars at the eastern end of the cut being outside the yard limits. It was after the 5 cars had been placed on the transfer track and the engine had started to move the 12 cars westward that the accident occurred.

Engine Foreman Saner, of yard engine 486, stated that before starting to the eastern end of the yard the yardmaster told him that train No. 61 was then about at Savannah, 12.4 miles east of St. Joseph. After the 17 cars had been hauled out on the main track he heard the engine whistle of train No. 61, and told Switchman Gordon to ride on the head end of the cut as it was moved eastward on the main track and after it came to a stop to continue eastward and flag train No. 61, as he did not know if any of the cars would be outside the yard limits, he judged that train No. 61 was then coming around the curve on to the straight track east of the point of collision. After the 5 cars of gravel had been placed on the transfer track Foreman Saner lined the derail and at this time he could plainly see train No. 61 coming down the hill and he said he thought that when engine 486 coupled to the cars on the main track the engine of train No. 61 was about 15 or 20 car lengths distant. Foreman Saner stated that after this coupling was made he gave Engineer Ray a back-up signal and got on the front footboard, facing the engine, and the

first he knew of anything wrong was when the accident occurred, knocking him to the ground. Engine Foreman Saner further stated that he expected train No. 61 to approach yard limits under control and that he did not know how far Switchman Gordan/when sent back to protect the train.
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Engineman Ray, of engine 486, said he had received no information as to how late train No. 61 was running on this occasion and that he did not know it was approaching until the switch engine coupled to the 12 cars on the main track, just before starting westward, at which time Engine Foreman Saner told him of the approach of train No. 61 and then gave him a back-up signal. Engineman Ray was facing the direction from which train No. 61 was approaching, and the track was straight for a considerable distance, yet although he had looked in that direction he said it was raining exceptionally hard and that he did not see the train. Engineman Ray had seen Switchman Gordan riding on a car near the east end of the cut at the time the 17 cars were moved eastward on the main track, but he did not see the switchman after these cars were brought to a stop. He also said it was not customary to afford protection while performing work at the transfer track unless the main track was used outside of the yard limits, which was the case in this instance, he did not whistle out a flag, as he supposed his movements would be protected by the yard-limit board. The statements of Fireman De Toskey practically corroborated those of Engineman Ray, Fireman De Toskey also stated that his vision was restricted to about 10 car-lengths on account of the heavy rain.

Switchman Gordan, of yard engine 486, quoted Engine Foreman Saner as saying he heard the engine whistle of train No. 61, and on looking in that direction they saw the smoke from that train, as well as the outline of the train, when it entered the straight track, at which time it was not raining so hard. The engine foreman instructed him to protect against train No. 61, and he rode the east car of the cut until it came to a stop, outside yard limits, and then went back to flag, but carried no flagging equipment. Train No. 61 was about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant as he started toward it, giving stop signals on the engineman's side and on getting no response he crossed over to the fireman's side, after having gone back a distance of about six car lengths. No apparent attention was paid to his stop signals, although as the train passed him he could hear the grinding of the brakes. Switchman Gordan thought the 12 cars had been standing on the main track outside the yard limits a period of three or four minutes, and that ^{the} collision occurred at a point about two car-lengths inside the yard limits.

Engineman McNulty of train No. 61 stated that the air brakes on his train had been tested and that they worked properly enroute. He was looking ahead when approaching the

yard-limit board, but owing to the heavy rain he could not see over 15 or 18 carlengths. When his train had about reached the straight track he made a 10-pound reduction reducing the speed to about 20 miles an hour, then released the brakes and on reaching a point about 40 carlengths from the yard-limit board he made another air-brake reduction. Shortly afterwards, while leaning out of the cab window, looking ahead, he saw a box car on the main track and immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, and on again looking ahead he saw that there were several gondola cars between the box car and his engine. On reaching a point about 8 or 10 car-lengths from the yard-limit board, at which time the speed was about 15 or 20 miles an hour, he realized that the collision could not be averted, shouted a warning of danger and jumped. Engineman McNulty did not think that a full emergency effect was obtained, owing to the previous air-brake applications and the slippery condition of the rails, and said that he did not see Switchman Gordan protecting the cars. Engineman McNulty admitted that the accident took place within yard limits and that had he had his train under full control the accident would not have occurred. The statements of Fireman Miller and Head Brakeman Alice, of train No. 61, brought out no additional facts of importance.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of train No. 61 to be operated under proper control approaching yard limits, for which Engineman McNulty is responsible, a contributing cause was the failure of Engine Foreman Saner to use good judgment when switching on the main track after train No. 61 was seen to be approaching.

Rule 93 of the Book of Rules of this railroad reads in part as follows:

"* * * All trains and engines, other than first-class trains, must approach and must move within yard limits under control * * *".

"Under Control" is defined in the Book of Rules as follows "To be able to stop within one-half of the distance the track is seen to be clear". Had Engineman McNulty governed himself accordingly this accident would not have occurred.

After switch engine 486 had entered the transfer track and had coupled the 5 cars it was already handling to the 12 cars which were on the transfer track, it then hauled these 17 cars out on the main track. It was at this time that Engine Foreman Saner first became aware of the approach of train No. 61, and yet he directed the movement which resulted in the 12 cars being kicked eastward on the main track toward the approaching train, realizing the probability that they

would extend outside of the yard limits, without first providing proper protection for such a movement. As a matter of fact, at the time of the accident the cars had been moved westward until they were a car length or so inside of the yard limits, but this does not alter the fact that had Engine Foreman Sauer exercised the judgment which might reasonably have been expected of him he could easily have prevented the occurrence of this accident.

Had an adequate block signal system been in use on this line this accident probably would not have occurred; an adequate automatic train stop or train control device would have prevented it.

The employees involved were experienced men; 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. BCRLAND,

Director.