

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON
THE CAROLINA, CLINCHFIELD & OHIO RAILWAY AT ST.
PAUL, VA., ON JUNE 18, 1922.

July 7, 1922.

To the Commission.

On June 18, 1922, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio Railway at St. Paul, Va., which resulted in the death of 1 employee.

Location and method of operation.

This railroad extends between Elkhorn City, Ky., and Spartanburg, S. C., a distance of 277.3 miles, and in the vicinity of the point of accident is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. Under time-table rules, all except first-class trains must approach and run through yard-limits under full control, expecting to find the main track occupied. Time-table directions are used in this report, as the northbound train involved was traveling almost due south at the time of the accident. The accident occurred within the yard-limits of St. Paul, immediately north of the southern yard-limit board; approaching this point from the south there are 2,379 feet of tangent, an 8-degree curve to the left 188 feet in length, then 286 feet of tangent, followed by an 8-degree curve to the left 1,158 feet in length, the accident occurring at the extreme southern end of this curve, at which point the grade is practically level. The view from the engineman's side of a northbound engine of the type involved in this accident, 2-8-8-2, is practically entirely obscured, starting at a point about 3,200 feet from the point of accident, a partial view may be obtained from the fireman's side for the following 1,700 feet; from this point practically a clear view can be had for the next 700 feet, then for the following

300 feet it is entirely obscured by several large trees, beyond which point the view is unrestricted for 500 feet. The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 1.40 p.m.

Description

Freight train extra 301, hauled by engine 301 and assisted by engine 300, in charge of Conductor Taylor and Enginemen Dickinson and Schaub, had arrived at St. Paul, southbound, at 9.05 a.m. Several hours were consumed in switching at the various yards in this vicinity, and a train was being made up in readiness to depart over the Dupps Creek Line of the Norfolk & Western Railway. The rear portion of this train, consisting of 20 cars, 1 box car used as a baggage car, and 1 coach, on which the markers were already displayed, was standing on the main track, with the coach on the southern end of the cars, a few feet inside of the south yard-limit board, when it was struck by extra 706.

Northbound freight train extra 706 consisted of 89 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 706, and was in charge of Conductor Lindy and Engineman Jennings. This train passed Guest, 9.6 miles from St. Paul, at 1.13 p.m., and collided with the standing cars while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 10 miles an hour.

Engine 706 was slightly damaged, while none of the cars in this train was either derailed or damaged, eight of the standing cars were derailed and more or less damaged. The employee killed was the head brakeman of extra 706, who was riding on the pilot of engine 706 at the time of the accident.

Summary of evidence.

On account of the impossibility of obtaining a clear view of the track ahead from the engineman's side of the cab, Engineman Jennings, as was the custom, was operating the train on information imparted to him by hand signals given by Fireman Barron, having received a proceed signal on approaching the curve, he increased the speed, and the engine was working steam at the time of the accident, no further information having been received from the fireman. Engineman Jennings said he watched Fireman Barron very attentively, and apparently he was keeping a sharp lookout ahead. Fireman Barron stated that at the time Engineman Jennings inquired as to whether or not the track was clear, his view of the vicinity of the yard-limit board was ob-

structed by trees, but the track beyond looked clear; after traveling a short distance he saw the cars, also the target of the north switch of Castle passing siding, located 67 feet south of where the cars were standing, but for some unknown reason he thought the cars were on the side track. As a matter of fact, Castle passing siding is entirely outside of St. Paul yard limits and there is no other track of any kind paralleling the main track near where the accident occurred. Fireman Barron admitted that he was familiar with the territory in this vicinity, and that he imparted wrong information to Engineman Jennings, also that had he notified the engineman to apply the brakes when he first saw the cars, the train could have been brought to a stop in time to have averted the accident.

None of the members of the crew of extra 301 was near the rear of their train, and they knew nothing about the accident until after it had occurred. On returning to the scene of the accident, Conductor Taylor, of extra 301, in company with Conductor Lundy and Engineman Jennings, of extra 706, boarded the side of a car about 25 car-lengths from the rear end of extra 706 and found that from that point they could see engine 706 and practically all of the cars that had been left standing on the main track, and that there was nothing to prevent the fireman, or the brakeman riding on the pilot, from seeing the cars ahead.

Under time-table rule 41, employees are prohibited from riding on the pilots of engines in road service.

Conclusions.

This accident was due to the failure of Fireman Barron to notify Engineman Jennings that the main track was occupied.

Fireman Barron saw the cars, and knew there was no track of any kind paralleling the main track at the point where the cars were standing, yet for some reason he was under the impression the cars were on a passing track and that the main track was clear.

Head Brakeman Bryant also could have seen the cars in time to warn the engineman. His failure to do so, coupled with his failure to save his life by jumping from the pilot of the engine, which he could have done with

safety, as the train was moving at a low rate of speed, makes it appear probable that he was either asleep or for some unknown reason had become so incapacitated as to be unable to take care of himself.

Head Brakeman Bryant had had $8\frac{1}{2}$ months experience during a period of about 1 year and 8 months, the other employees were experienced men. At the time of the accident the crew of extra 706 had been on duty about 11 hours, after having been off duty for periods varying from 15 hours to several days.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. Borland,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.