

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE CHICAGO ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC RAILWAY AT GLENVILLE, MINN., ON FEBRUARY 8, 1925.

June 8, 1925.

To the Commission:

On February 8, 1925, there was a head-end collision between a Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad passenger train and a Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway freight train on the line of the last-named road at Glenville, Minn., resulting in the injury of one passenger, two mail clerks, two Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad employees and one Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Employee.

Location and method of operation

The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway handles trains of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad between Albert Lea, Minn., and Manly, Iowa, a distance of about 28 miles, within which territory this accident occurred, it is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. At a point 607 feet west of the station at Glenville there is a stop board, while 288 feet farther west is located the west switch of the passing track; this track parallels the main track on the north, the station being situated between the two tracks. All westbound trains are required to come to a full stop at the stop board, which governs the approach to the junction with the Illinois Central track; the junction switch is located 605 feet west of the stop board. The accident occurred at a cattle guard, located 412 feet west of the junction switch or about 1,620 feet west of the station; approaching this point from the east the track is tangent for more than 1 mile, extending to a point about 150 feet east of the junction switch, from which point there is a 2° curve to the left 770 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point about 560 feet from its eastern end. Approaching from the west there is 1,600 feet of tangent, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is practically level. In clear weather the view of the point of accident is unobscured for a considerable distance in either direction, however, there was a dense fog

at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 3.10 a.

Description

Westbound Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway freight train extra 2316 consisted of 30 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2316, and was in charge of Conductor Mahoney and Engineman Roy. This train left Manly at 2 a.m. and on passing Kensett, 4 miles distant, received a copy of train order No. 5, Form 19, reading as follows:

"M&StL Eng 462 run Extra Albert Lea to
Manly Meet Extra 2316 at Glenville
Extra 2316 West hold main track at
Glenville."

On passing Northwood, 6.4 miles further, a copy of train order No. 6, Form 19, was received, reading in part as follows:

"M&StL Eng 229 run Extra Albert Lea to
Manly Meet Extra 2316 West At Glenville
* * * Extra 2316 West hold main track at
Glenville."

Extra 2316 arrived at Glenville at 3.09 a. m., and as the engine passed the station the operator handed on five train orders, among which was a copy of train order No. 6, addressed to the operator as a middle order, and also a clearance card, the clearance card stated that there were no block restrictions after the arrival of extra 229. Extra 2316 was brought to a stop just before reaching the stop board, and then immediately proceeded, and collided with extra 229 while traveling at a speed of about 10 or 12 miles an hour.

Eastbound Minneapolis & St. Louis passenger train extra 229, being detoured between Albert Lea and Manly, consisted of one rail car, one baggage car, one coach, one chair and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named, hauled by engine 229, and was in charge of Pilot Conductor Nason and Pilot Engineman Reed. The cars were of steel-underframe construction with the exception of the baggage car, which was of wooden construction. At Albert Lea the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 6, previously referred to, and the train departed from that point at 2.55 a. m., passed Curtis, 6.1 miles west of Glenville and the last open office, at 3.01 a.m., and collided with extra 2316 at Glenville while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 15 or 20 miles an hour.

Both engines remained upright, but were considerably damaged. The rear end of the second car in extra 229 was telescoped a distance of about 8 feet, while the fifth car in extra 2316 was demolished.

Summary of evidence.

Engineman Roy, of extra 2316, stated that he approached Glenville at a low rate of speed and identified one of the two trains they were to meet at this point, standing on the east end of the passing track; he then instructed Head Brakeman Murphy to be prepared to open the west switch of the passing track for extra 229 provided that train was not already in the clear on the passing track. Just before reaching the station he noticed that the train-order board was displayed, indicating there were orders for his train. The operator came out of the office and handed on the orders by hoop to Head Brakeman Murphy as the engine passed the station, the head brakeman turning them over to the engineman. Just before reaching the stop board Engineman Roy brought the train to a complete stop, and then proceeded almost immediately, assuming from the fact that the orders were delivered while the train was in motion that it was being advanced against extra 229. This would have been in accordance with the last paragraph of revised operating rule 211, reading as follows:

"To deliver a '19' order not to be executed at the station where the train order is to be delivered, the operator will, upon approach of the train, deliver a copy of the order and Clearance Form 'A' properly prepared to both front and rear of train without stopping it. If the train order is to be executed at the station where the order is to be delivered, it will be delivered to the engineman at the train order office after the train has stopped, unless delivery of both copies is made to the conductor while train is not in motion."

Engineman Roy did not check the clearance card against the orders until after he had read all of the orders, train order No. 6 being the last one he read, and by this time his engine had passed the west passing-track switch, extra 229 was only a short distance away, and it was too late to avert the accident. Engineman Roy stated that the air brakes worked properly and the headlight burned brightly, no trouble being experienced with them en route. He admitted responsibility for the accident, saying that he had no authority to proceed without definitely knowing the contents of his orders.

The testimony of other members of the crew of extra 2316 practically corroborated that of Engineman Roy; Fireman Duclos stated that he was unable to see the headlight of extra 229 for a distance of more than 2 car lengths and estimated the speed of his train to have been about 10 or 12 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Extra 229 had reduced speed considerably preparatory to entering the passing track at Glenville in accordance with the requirements of train order No. 6, and none of the members of the crew was aware of anything wrong until they saw the headlight of extra 2316 a few car lengths distant.

Operator Propst, on duty at Glenville, stated that owing to the dense fog he had stepped outside the office frequently to watch for approaching trains. When extra 2316 approached the station he went outside, and as he could see that the engineman was going to make a good stop for the stop board, and supposing that he knew about meeting extra 229, he did not think there was any reason for anything happening and consequently handed on the orders as the engine passed him. On account of the fog he was unable to see whether extra 229 was in the clear, but when extra 2316 came to a stop, and then immediately proceeded, he assumed that extra 229 was in on the passing track, and as the caboose of extra 2316 passed, at a speed of about 5 miles an hour, he handed on the other set of orders by hoop.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Roy, of extra 2316, to comply with the requirements of a train order establishing a meeting point with extra 229, a contributing cause was the failure of Operator Propst to wait until extra 2316 came to a stop before delivering the middle order, as required by the rules.

Engineman Roy was familiar with the contents of train order No. 6, but the fact that Operator Propst handed the train orders on by hoop as the engine passed the office led him to assume that his train was being advanced against extra 229 and he did not discover his error until it was too late to avert the accident. He acknowledged responsibility for his mistake.

Under rule 211, as revised, it was incumbent upon Operator Propst to wait until extra 2316 came to a stop before delivering the middle order. Instead of doing

so, however, he handed the order on as the engine passed the office, in violation of the rule, and thereby defeated the purpose for which the rule was intended. Had he properly delivered this order, in all probability Engineman Roy would not have assumed that his train was being advanced against extra 329 and this accident therefore would have been averted.

Had an adequate automatic 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.

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.