

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
NORTH FORT WORTH, TEXAS, ON OCTOBER 12, 1930.

November 6, 1930.

To the Commission:

On October 12, 1930, there was a collision between a Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific passenger train and a Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad of Texas transfer train on the tracks of the former railway at North Fort Worth, Texas, which resulted in the injury of 12 passengers, 1 mail clerk, and 1 employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on Sub-Division 1 in the Second District of the Oklahoma-Southern Division, which extends between Waurika Yard, Okla., and Fort Worth, Texas, a distance of 112.3 miles, and is a single-track line except between North Fort Worth and Seventeenth Street, Fort Worth, a distance of 2.8 miles; trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred within the double-track territory, on the eastbound main track, at a point 350 feet west of the eastern end of double track. Approaching the end of double track from the east, the track is tangent for a distance of 7,423.1 feet, this tangent extending for some distance beyond that point. The grade at the point of accident is 0.16 per cent descending for westbound trains.

The switch stand at the east end of double track is of the high-circle type and is located on the north side of the main track. The target is a single banner, painted red, and is mounted 7 feet above the base of the stand. The normal position of this switch is for the turnout leading to the eastbound main track, and with the switch set in this position the target is not displayed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1.37 p.m.

Description

C.R.I. & P. westbound passenger train No. 31 consisted of one mail car, one baggage car, one coach, one chair car, and one Pullman sleeping car, all of steel construction, hauled by engine 865, and was in charge of Conductor Libby and Engineman Stapleton. This train departed from Waurika, 108.9 miles east of North Fort Worth, at 10.52. a.m., 22 minutes late, passed Saginaw, 103.8 miles beyond, at 1.29 p.m., 2 minutes late, entered the eastbound main track at North Fort Worth, and collided with the M-K-T of T. transfer train while traveling at a speed variously estimated at from 6 to 18 miles per hour.

The M-K-T of T. transfer train consisted of 35 cars, hauled by engine 108, headed east, and was in charge of Engine Foreman Nordham and Engineman Shackelford. This train left M-K-T Ney yard en route to Rock Island Peach Street Yard, but upon arriving at the latter point the foreman was instructed to place the cars in Race Track yard, which is located a short distance east of Peach Street yard. The train then continued eastward and was brought to a stop on the eastbound main track just west of the east end of double track, awaiting the arrival of train No. 31, and was still standing at this point when it was struck by that train.

None of the equipment was derailed, although both engines and the first four cars in train No. 31 were more or less damaged. The employee injured was the rear brakeman of train No. 31.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Stapleton of train No. 31, stated that he went on duty upon the arrival of the train at Chickasha, 64.6 miles east of Waurika Yard, and that before departing from that point an air-brake test was made, the inspectors reporting that all of the brakes functioned properly, and said he experienced no difficulty in handling the train throughout the trip. As the train approached the end of double-track, he applied the brakes with the intention of bringing the train to a stop so that the switch could be properly lined, but when the train reached a point just west of Trinity River bridge, located approximately

800 feet east of the switch, he observed a train standing on the eastbound track and also a member of the crew of that train approaching the switch, which led him to believe that that party would line the switch so that his own train could enter the westbound track, this being the usual practice when another train was met at that point. As a result, therefore, the engine-man released the brakes, but instead of the person in question lining the switch, he started giving stop signals, and Engineman Stapleton immediately applied the brakes in emergency, due to the brakes just having been released, however, the proper emergency effect was not obtained, and he was unable to stop in time to prevent the accident. He estimated the speed of his train at 15 or 18 miles per hour at the time the brakes were released, and 12 or 15 miles per hour at the time of the accident. Engineman Stapleton knew the rules required that trains must approach the end of double track, etc., prepared to stop, unless switch and signals are right and track is clear, and said that he had his train under such control at the time he released the brakes after seeing the man at the switch.

Fireman Webb, of train No. 31, stated that the train was traveling at a speed of about 20 miles per hour while passing through the interlocking limits at North Fort Worth. When the train reached Trinity River bridge, he noticed a train on the eastbound track and also saw a trainman walking towards the switch. At that time the train was running about 15 or 18 miles per hour and he was not alarmed about stopping short of the switch until the engine-man released the brakes. A short time later the person at the switch began giving stop signals and the engine-man again applied the brakes. Fireman Webb kept watching the man at the switch, and jumped off when he realized that the switch was not going to be lined for the westbound track, this being just about the time the engine reached the switch; he thought the speed had been reduced to about 10 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Conductor Libby, of train No. 31, thought the speed of the train had been reduced to 18 or 20 miles per hour as it approached the point of accident, and until the brakes were released, there was no indication that the train would not stop before it reached the end of double track. As the train continued to travel at about the same speed, he formed the opinion that a member of some other crew had lined the switch, which he said had frequently been the

case where Rock Island crews were involved, although he had never known of an instance of this kind with an M-K-T crew. He felt the emergency application of the brakes, after which the train travelled an additional distance of about its own length before the collision occurred, he estimated the speed at the time of the accident at 10 or 12 miles per hour.

After the accident, the engineman informed him that he was of the impression a trainman at the switch intended to open it, as he had observed that person fumbling with the lock.

Head Brakeman Steadham, of train No. 31, stated that the train approached the point of accident at a speed of between 30 and 35 miles per hour, this being reduced to about 30 miles per hour while crossing Trinity River bridge. He then got down on the steps of the coach preparatory to getting off and lining the switch as soon as the train stopped, so that the train could enter the westbound track. Upon looking ahead he saw some one at the switch, and took it for granted that that person would open the switch, but instead of doing so he stepped away from the stand and gave stop signals. Brakeman Steadham did not know whether another application of the brakes was made prior to the accident, as he jumped off as soon as he realized what was about to occur.

Rear Brakeman Naylor, of train No. 31, stated that the train passed through the interlocking plant at North Fort Worth at a speed of about 25 miles per hour. He was riding on the rear platform and after passing over Trinity River bridge he looked ahead along the fireman's side of the train and observed a train standing in the clear on the eastbound main track. He then crossed over to the engineman's side, looked ahead, and noticed that the switch target was not displayed and that no one was near the switch, whereupon he immediately opened the emergency brake valve at the rear of the train, he had felt no air-brake application prior to this time and was of the opinion that the emergency application had the proper effect, reducing the speed to 6 or 8 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Switchman Robertson, of the M-K-T of T. crew, stated that when his train arrived at Peach Street yard they were instructed to place the cars in Race Track yard and to look out for train No. 31, which was due at 1.33 p.m. His foreman then instructed him to move the train to the end of double track and wait until train No. 31 had passed. After arriving at the latter point, he noticed that the

switch was lined for the eastbound track, on which his train was moving; he thought this was unusual, so he proceeded to the switch to see if anything was wrong with it, but found it locked in that position. He decided to line it for the westbound track, but as he did not possess a Rock Island switch key he returned to the engine and inquired of the engineman and fireman if they had a key, and they both replied in the negative. He then returned to the switch and when the opposing train came into view on the bridge east of that point, he walked about 30 yards towards that train and gave stop signals with his hat until the train had almost reached him, when it became necessary to step off the track to avoid injury. He estimated the speed of train No. 31 when it first came into view at 40 or 50 miles per hour, but this speed had been reduced to about 15 miles per hour when the engine passed him. Switchman Robertson further stated that he had never been in that locality before, but when he examined the switch and noticed it was locked for the eastbound track, it indicated to him that the switch was lined in its normal position, and for this reason he did not think it was necessary to proceed farther eastward to flag train No. 31.

Engineman Shackelford, of the yard crew, stated that after stopping on the eastbound main track, he and the fireman got off the engine and it was then discovered that the switch was lined differently than double-track switches that they had been accustomed to, and this caused them to become uneasy. He said Switchman Robertson then proceeded to the switch and endeavored to throw it, but was unable to do so as they had no switch key. As an extra precaution, Switchman Robertson walked about 40 or 50 feet beyond the switch and when train No. 31 appeared, the switchman gave stop signals; these signals were not acknowledged by the approaching train, although the brakes apparently were applied, as he saw dust flying from beneath the train when it was approximately 150 feet away. He thought the speed of that train was about 10 or 12 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

The statements of Fireman Taylor, of the yard crew, substantiated those of Switchman Robertson and Engineman Shackelford.

Switch Foreman Nordham, of the yard crew, stated that upon arrival at Peach Street yard the assistant yardmaster instructed him to shove the cars into Race Track yard, the yardmaster stating that train No. 31 was due at the "north side", meaning North Fort Worth, at 1.33 p.m., and was reported on time. Foreman Nordham then instructed his crew to proceed to the east end of double track and wait until the superior train had passed before attempting to shove the cars into the latter yard. He rode on the rear end of the train until it stopped, and then went over into Race Track yard to locate a place in which to set the cars off, and was in that locality when the collision occurred. He further stated that he was the only member of the crew in possession of a Rock Island switch key.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Stapleton, of train No. 31, properly to control the speed of his train approaching the end of double track, as required by the rules.

Under special instructions contained in the time-table, it is provided that at Fort Worth the normal position of switches at each end of double track will be for eastward movements. Rule 98 of the current book of rules provides that trains must approach the end of double track, etc., prepared to stop, unless the switches and signals are right and the track is clear. According to the statements of Engineman Stapleton, he reduced speed to about 15 or 18 miles per hour while approaching the end of double track, and still had the brakes applied when he noticed a train standing on the eastbound track, and some one standing at the switch. This caused him to assume that the person at the switch would line it to permit his train to enter the westbound track without stopping, which in turn resulted in his releasing the brakes. As soon as he discovered that the switch was not going to be properly lined, he applied the brakes in emergency, but it was then too late to prevent the accident. Engineman Stapleton knew the normal position of the switch and was also familiar with the rule as to how his train should have been operated approaching that point, and he is at fault for assuming that someone else would attend to the duty of lining the switch properly.

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.