

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
LINE OF THE CLEVELAND SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY & LIGHT
COMPANY NEAR BROOKE, OHIO, ON FEBRUARY 19, 1928.

March 27, 1928.

To the Commission:

On February 19, 1928, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the line of the Cleveland Southwestern Railway & Light Company near Brooke, Ohio, resulting in the death of one passenger and one employee, and the injury of three passengers and two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commissioner of Ohio.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Western Division extending between Cleveland and Wellington, Ohio, a distance of 41.8 miles, this is an electric line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The point of accident was about 1,500 feet west of Brooke, near Stop 84 $\frac{1}{2}$; approaching this point from the east there is a 10°33' curve to the left 183 feet in length, followed by 628 feet of tangent, the accident occurring at the extreme western end of this tangent. Approaching from the west the track is tangent for a distance of 463 feet, followed by a 14° 17' 36" curve to the right 236 feet in length, the accident occurring at the extreme eastern end of this curve, owing to trolley poles, trees and shrubbery on the inside of this curve, neither train could be seen from the motorman's compartment of the opposing train until they were within a very short distance of each other. The grade for eastbound trains is about 1 per cent descending at the point of accident.

Superiority of scheduled trains is not conferred by direction, opposing trains meeting at regular time-table meeting points, unless otherwise ordered. In the event an opposing train has not arrived at a meeting point, crews are required to communicate with the dispatcher by telephone. All extra trains must keep out of the way of regular trains and clear their time at least five minutes,

unless relieved of this necessity by order, and failing to clear the main line as required, they must provide proper protection.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 5.25 p.m.

Description

Eastbound freight train extra 413 consisted of motor 413, of wooden construction, and was in charge of Conductor Stock and Motorman Marsac. This train left Oberlin, 6.5 miles west of Brooke, at about 5.12 p.m., and was approaching Brooke when it collided with train No. 613 after having been brought nearly to a stop.

Westbound passenger train No. 613 consisted of motor 217, of steel construction, and was in charge of Conductor Barnes and Motorman Hoppie. This train departed from Elyria, 2.2 miles east of Brooke, at 5.13 p.m., on time, passed Brooke at 5.24 p.m., one minute late, and on reaching a point just west of Stop 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ it collided with extra 413 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 15 miles per hour.

Motor 413 telescoped motor 217 a distance of about 6 feet; both cars remained upright, with only their lead trucks derailed. The employee killed was the motorman of train No. 613.

Summary of evidence

Motorman Marsac, of extra 413, stated that he checked his time-table before leaving Wellington, 15.1 miles west of Brooke, and saw that his train could make Oberlin, 8.6 miles east of Wellington, for westbound train No. 327. After this had been done his train departed from Oberlin, without his having made any further check of the time-table. He said he snuff off the power before reaching Stop 86, located approximately 1,990 feet west of the point of accident, and permitted the car to drift until it reached a point near the western end of the curve approaching the point of accident. He then made a light application of the air brakes, as he did not consider it safe to operate around the sharp curve at a speed of more than 10 miles per hour, and then released the brakes. The speed of his train was between 5 and 8 miles per hour and it had drifted almost around the curve before he saw train No. 613 approaching, about 300 or 350 feet distant. He shouted a warning of danger to the conductor, applied the air brakes, which worked properly, and stepped back out of the vestibule, and thought his car had been brought almost to a stop when the accident occurred. Motorman

Marsac further stated that he could not account for his failure to check against train No. 613, due out of Elyria, at 5.13 p.m., and said he figured that the next westbound train out of Elyria was train No. 331, due out of that point at 6.42 p.m. He thoroughly understood the rule in regard to clearing regular trains, had discussed with Conductor Stock the question of where regular trains would be met, had had his proper rest before going on duty, and said that there was nothing on his mind to bother him. Motorman Marsac said that it was simply a case of having entirely overlooked train No. 613.

Conductor Stock, of extra 413, stated that when Motorman Marsac consulted the time-table before leaving Wellington he was standing by the motorman's side and figured that after meeting train No. 327 at Oberlin there would not be another train to be met before reaching Elyria Shops, located 1 mile east of Brooke. Conductor Stock was riding in the front vestibule of the car while it rounded the curve at a low rate of speed and the first he knew of anything wrong was when Motorman Marsac shouted a warning of danger. The conductor at once jumped back out of the vestibule, the accident occurring immediately afterwards. It appeared from Conductor Stock's statements that he also had had his proper rest before going on duty, that there was nothing on his mind to bother him, and that the accident was the result of having entirely overlooked train No. 613.

Conductor Barnes, of train No. 613, stated that he was about at the third seat from the front end of his car when he heard the whistle sounded and on looking ahead saw extra 413 approaching, directly in front of his train, the accident occurring almost immediately. He estimated the speed of his car to have been about 18 miles per hour when he first saw extra 413 and about 15 miles per hour at the time of the accident. Conductor Barnes also said that the air brakes had been applied on his car when about 100 feet from the curve, in order to reduce speed preparatory to rounding the curve, and that an emergency application was made immediately prior to the accident.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the fact that the crew of extra 413 overlooked train No. 613, an opposing superior train.

Conductor Stock and Motorman Marsac, of extra 413, admitted that they entirely overlooked train No. 613 and could offer no explanation for their oversight. These employees had nothing in the way of unusual conditions with which to contend, and under these circumstances there is little that can be said by way of excuse for their failure to keep their minds on their duties.

In this instance it is noted that the wooden car telescoped the steel car. Apparently the reason for this was that the floor line and buffers of the steel car were lower than those of the wooden car, resulting in the wooden car overriding the floor of the steel car. Had the buffers been of a uniform height, and had the cars been equipped with an anti-telescoping device, the consequences of the accident probably would have been considerably mitigated.

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.

Conductor Stock entered the service of this railroad on May 8, 1923, prior to which he had had two years' experience on an electric line in Pennsylvania. According to the records he was suspended for running by a meeting point on March 3, 1924, and was again suspended for a similar occurrence on July 16, 1927. Motorman Marsac entered the service on October 5, 1923, according to the records his train ran against an opposing train on June 4, 1927, for which he was suspended. At the time of the accident these employees had been on duty 5 hours and 25 minutes, prior to which they had been off duty 11 hours or more. The crew of train No 613 had been on duty 3 hours and 33 minutes at the time of the accident, prior to which they had been off duty more than 13 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.