

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILWAY
AT CLEVELAND, OHIO, ON OCTOBER 17, 1930.

November 24, 1930.

To the Commission:

On October 17, 1930, there was a head-end collision between a first-class train and a shuttle service train on the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway at Cleveland, Ohio, which resulted in the death of three employees and the injury of four employees. This investigation was made in conjunction with a representative of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Cleveland Terminal District, which extends between BE block station, 12.19 miles west of the Cleveland Union Terminal, and BR block station, 12.88 miles east of the terminal. Eastbound Big Four passenger trains, en route to the terminal, stop at Linndale, 6.52 miles east of BE block station, at which point the engine and Cleveland baggage cars are cut off and operated as a scheduled first-class train to the old depot, moving via Clark Avenue and DK block stations, which points are 2.43 miles apart. It was within this latter territory that the accident occurred, where there are two tracks in operation, one known as track 4, signalled for movements in each direction and operated as single track, and the other known as the switching lead, which is operated under yard rules with no block-signal system in use. Trains entering this lead at either end do so by signal indication, reporting by telephone to the operator at Clark Avenue when they clear the lead at intermediate points. The accident occurred on the lead, at a point about half way between DK and Clark Avenue block stations. Approaching the point of accident from the west, the track is tangent for a distance of approximately 1,330 feet, followed by a 3° curve to the right 223 feet in length, the accident occurring on the curve at a point about 50 feet from its eastern end, approaching from the east, the track is tangent for a distance of 889 feet, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.717 per cent descending for eastbound trains.

The weather was misty at the time of the accident, which occurred about 1.55 a.m.

Description

Eastbound train LF-118 consisted of one baggage car, hauled by engine 6517, and was in charge of Engineman Henehan and Fireman Sheffield. This train departed from Linnale, 2.47 miles west of Clark Avenue, at 1.48 a.m., three minutes late, passed Clark Avenue, where it was diverted from track 4 to the switching lead, at 1.53 a.m., and collided with train SH-3 while traveling at a speed variously estimated by the members of the crew to have been from 8 to 35 miles per hour.

Westbound shuttle train SH-3 consisted of two baggage cars, hauled by engine 6441, and was in charge of Conductor Dixon and Engineman McCarthy. This train departed from Front Street, 1.07 miles east of DK block station, at 1.50 a.m., passed DK block station at 1.53 a.m., and collided with train LF-118 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 10 and 25 miles per hour.

Both engines were partially derailed, the head end of engine 6517 being partially mounted on engine 6441. Two of the cars received slight damage, but none of the cars was derailed. The employees killed were the conductor, fireman and brakeman of train SH-3, while those injured were the engineman of train SH-3 and the engineman, fireman and flagman of train LF-118.

Summary of Evidence

Engineman Henehan, of train LF-118, stated that at Clark Avenue his train was diverted to the switching lead, but he could not state positively whether or not he stopped at Clark Avenue. He was operating his train at a speed of 10 or 12 miles per hour until the fireman called his attention to an engine working in an adjoining yard and he reduced the speed, but had resumed a speed of about 8 or 10 miles per hour on rounding the curve on which the accident occurred. He saw the headlight of an approaching train, but thought it was on the other track and made no attempt to apply the air brakes before the collision occurred. He stated that the headlight on his own engine was dimmed, but the headlight on train SH-4 was burning brightly.

Fireman Sheffield, of train LF-118, stated that approaching Burton Street, approximately 1 mile east of Clark Avenue, he saw an approaching engine and told the engineman to slow down. The engineman released the brakes however, after seeing that this engine was on the lead

track of the yard, and the fireman thought they were traveling at a speed of about 15 miles per hour when he saw the headlight of an engine on the curve, the collision occurring almost immediately. The headlight on his own engine was dim.

Flagman Harnett, of train LF-118, stated that he was riding in the vestibule on the rear end of the baggage car, and he estimated the speed of their train at the time of the accident to have been between 25 and 35 miles per hour.

Engineman McCarthy, of train SH-3, stated that he was operating his train at a speed of 12 or 15 miles per hour when he saw train LF-118 approaching. He made a service application of the air brakes as he did not know on which track the opposing train was moving, and also dimmed his headlight. When he saw the opposing headlight dimmed, at about the time he dimmed his own headlight, he realized that they both were on the same track and at once applied the brakes in emergency, but it was too late to have any effect.

Flagman Dee, of train SH-3, who was riding in the rear vestibule of the last car, estimated the speed of their train to have been 10 or 15 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Yardmaster Mahoney stated that he was in the vicinity of the point of accident at the time of its occurrence, and that train SH-3 passed him just before the collision occurred, working steam and moving at a speed he estimated to have been about 20 or 25 miles per hour.

Yard Conductor Methena, who was working in the yard at the time of the accident, stated that he saw both trains approaching, both headlights were burning brightly and train SH-3 was traveling at a speed of about 20 or 25 miles per hour, but he was unable to estimate the speed of train LH-118. After the collision, he examined the engines and found the brakes set on engine 6441, of train SH-3, and the throttle partly open, while on engine 6517, of train LH-118, the brake-valve handle was in lap position and the throttle closed.

Operator Mishkovich, on duty at DK block station, stated that he called the operator at Clark Avenue, told him shuttle train SH-3 had departed from Front Street, and asked for permission for this train to use the switching lead. The operator told him it would be all right, that train LH-118 had departed from Linndale and that he would have that train use track 4. After train SH-3 had passed DK block station, the operator at Clark Avenue called him and said that train LH-118 was using the lead track. Operator Mishkovich stated that he did not ask for permission from the dispatcher to

use the switching lead, that he knew of no rule or order requiring such permission, that it had been the practice for the operators at Clark Avenue and DK block stations to handle the movements between those stations, and that the only time the dispatcher was consulted was when there was a puller out of the yard for Linndale or points west.

Operator Stephen, on duty at Clark Avenue block station, stated that he gave Operator Mishkovich permission for train SH-3 to use the lead track. He then saw train LF-118 approaching and changed the arrangement, he claimed he called Operator Mishkovich and told him that train LF-118 was going to use the switching lead, but admitted he did not receive an acknowledgement to this change, although he knew that it was necessary. He said he called DK block station again and told the operator that train LF-118 was on the switching lead, at which time the other operator said the shuttle train was also on the lead. His reason for changing the arrangement was that there was no approach indication on the switching lead, and when there is a train out of DK block station, the stock yard engine can not switch if it has a long pull, and for that reason he wanted to keep the lead track clear and in so doing it would also make it more convenient for himself. It was his understanding that the movements over track 4 and the switching lead were to be handled between the operator at DK and himself, and he did not understand that it was necessary for him to get permission from the dispatcher to use these tracks, although he did state that he consulted the dispatcher in case of puller engines. He had been an operator since May 30, 1929, and had been working at Clark Avenue only six days.

Dispatcher Smith stated that the operator at DK block station reported train SH-3 as entering the switching lead at 1 53 a m, but he had to ask the operator at Clark Avenue for a report on train LF-118, this being given him at 1.53 a.m., neither operator having asked him for permission to use this track. He stated that track 4 was a main track for movements of trains in both directions, and that the switching lead was a track used for switching trains in and out of the yard, and is under the supervision of the dispatcher through the operator at Clark Avenue. He had been instructed to use the switching lead only for switching trains, except when the lead track was clear and track 4 was blocked, and while the operators are instructed to get permission from the dispatcher before using these tracks, he was aware that they always did not do it, he had not taken up the matter with his superiors, however, as the movements had always been made all right in the past.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the action of Operator Stephen, at Clark Avenue block station, in diverting train LF-118 to the switching lead after giving the operator at DK block station permission for train SH-3 to use that track

Operator Stephen stated that after making arrangements with the operator at DK block station for train SH-3 to use the switching lead, and train LF-118 to use track 4, he changed the arrangement and told the DK operator that train LF-118 would use the lead track. Later, after train LF-118 had passed Clark Avenue, he called the operator at DK block station and told ^{Stephen} him that train LF-118 was using the lead track, and was told that train SH-3 was already on the lead. It is apparent that Operator Stephen became confused in the arrangements he made with the operator at DK block station as to which tracks these trains were to use.

Dispatcher Smith said the instructions are that operators get permission from the dispatcher before allowing movements to be made between Clark Avenue and DK block stations, yet he knew that the operators were arranging movements between themselves without first consulting with him, and it also appeared that he had never taken up the matter with his superiors because the movements had always been made safely in the past. So far as the two operators were concerned, it is clear that neither of them was acquainted with any requirement that they obtain the dispatcher's permission before authorizing movements of the kind here involved. Not only did Dispatcher Smith fail to show the proper interest in having movements handled in accordance with the instructions he said he had received, but the lack of a uniform understanding between dispatcher and operators as to what they were required to do is difficult of explanation, and is a situation for which there is no excuse. Steps to remedy this matter should be taken at once.

There is a question whether each train was not traveling at a higher rate of speed than contemplated by the rules governing yard movements, and it is believed that if these enginemen had been operating their trains with proper caution, especially around the curve where the view was obstructed to some extent, the results would not have been so disastrous.

All of the employees involved in this accident were experienced men, with the exception of Operator Stephen

who had had one and one-half years' experience as an operator, and six days' experience at Clark Avenue block station. 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.