

## 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 DELAWARE & HUDSON COMPANY AT HUDSON, PA.,  
ON JANUARY 14, 1926.

April 23, 1926.

To the Commission:

On January 14, 1926, there was a side collision between a cut of cars, handled by a yard engine, and a freight train on the line of the Delaware & Hudson Company at Hudson, Pa., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees and one other person.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Pennsylvania Division extending between Wilkes Barre, Pa., and Nineveh, N.Y., a distance of 92.4 miles, a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred at a crossover located opposite MC interlocking tower; approaching this point from the south the tracks are tangent for a considerable distance to MC tower, while north of MC tower there are about 100 feet of tangent followed by a 50° curve to the right 487 feet in length. The grade in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident is 1 per cent ascending northward.

MC tower is located on the west side of tracks 1 and 2, and a short distance north of the tower there is a switch leading from track 1 to the west or left to track 3. Tracks 1 and 2 are connected by a crossover immediately opposite the tower, this being the crossover at which the accident occurred. South of this crossover are the switches leading from tracks 1 and 2 to the various yard tracks of the south yard. Just south of the switch leading from track 1 to track 3 there is a three-arm interlocking signal; the bottom arm is a calling-on signal and governs southbound movements from track 3 to track 1 and thence through the interlocking plant. This bottom signal arm is so low on the mast, however, as not to be visible from a point north of the signal, to the engine crew of an engine headed north and hauling cars, being obscured by the cars and the curvature of the track; due to this fact, it has become the practice to make southbound switching movements from track 3 entirely upon hand signals.

It was dark and the weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8 31 p.m.

#### Description

Northbound freight train extra 857 consisted of 10 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 857, and was in charge of Conductor Gronswalt and Enginemen Matthews. It arrived at the yard office at Hudson at 8.31 p.m. on track 2 and was then moved northward to a point beyond the tower, preparatory to backing through the crossover opposite the tower and thence into the yard. Engine 857 was then cut off from the train and the route lined for helper engines 1007 and 1009, to the rear of extra 857, having received instructions to haul the cars of extra 857 in on yard track 5, in south yard. The movement had been started and while moving through the crossover opposite MC tower from track 2 to track 1 the cars of extra 857 were struck by a cut of cars which were being handled by yard engine 81.

Yard engine 81, hauling 15 cars, had pulled in on track 3 at about the time extra 857 arrived on track 2. After standing on this track for several minutes a hand back-up signal was observed in the vicinity of the rear of the cut of cars, which as a matter of fact was given by a member of the crew of extra 857. The fireman of engine 81, however, who was operating the engine at the time, at once started the back-up movement, the cars colliding with the train of extra 857 as it was moving through the crossover en route to the yard.

The force of the collision derailed four cars in extra 857 and the two rear cars in the cut handled by engine 81, one of the derailed cars was thrown against the tower, demolishing it. The employee killed was a gateman on duty at the street crossing near the tower.

#### Summary of evidence

Towerman Lintern, on duty at MC tower at the time, stated that engine 81 was switching from south yard to track 3 when extra 857 arrived at the yard office. He received instructions from the yardmaster to let extra 857 move northward clear of the crossovers, and then to have the two helper engines couple to the rear of extra 857 and haul that train through the crossovers into the yard, in the meantime yard engine 81 was to be held north of MC tower. He lined up the switches as directed and knew of nothing wrong until he heard the noise of the collision.

Conductor Grenawalt, of extra 857, stated that upon arriving at Hudson yard office he was instructed to move his train north of MC tower and was told that two helper engines would pull his train into the yard. His brakemen understood the intended movement and nothing was said relative to engine 81, and Conductor Grenawalt said he was unaware of the presence of that engine until the accident occurred.

Engineman Matthews, of extra 857, said that after his train was brought to a stop north of MC tower he noticed a yard engine and a cut of cars on track 3 but did not pay any particular attention to it at the time. After his engine had been uncoupled from the train and the helper engines coupled to the rear end and the backward movement started, he also started moving back very slowly, about which time he noticed a back-up signal being given in the vicinity of the rear of his train, which signal was followed almost instantly by violent stop signals from two different persons, followed shortly by the crash of the collision.

Brakeman Eynon, of extra 857, said he uncoupled engine 857 from his train after it had been brought to a stop north of MC tower and then started toward the rear end of the train, at that time noticing engine 81 on track 3. The helper engines were coupled to the rear of the train, the route lined and the movement into the yard started, after moving several car lengths it appeared to him that engine 857 was not following and he gave a backup signal with his lantern, this signal being given from a point about opposite the north end of the crossover. Immediately after this signal was given the cars attached to yard engine 81 started moving backward, and although he gave stop signals it was then too late to avert the collision. It was evident that the engineman of the yard engine had observed and acted upon the signal he had given to the engineman of his own train.

Brakeman Williams, of yard engine 81, said that after his engine and cut of cars had cleared the interlocking switches and signals he got off the car on which he was riding and stepped to the east side of the track on the inside of the curve, and signalled his engineman to stop. While standing at this point waiting for extra 857 to move through the crossovers into the yard Brakeman Eynon came up and after some slight conversation the brakeman continued southward toward MC tower. Shortly afterwards he observed his own train moving back toward MC tower, and immediately gave stop signals but the collision occurred before the signals were obeyed. Brakeman Williams said he did not give any signals other than the stop signal, nor did he see any given, but he was told by Brakeman Eynon right after the collision that the latter had given his own engineman a back-up signal which apparently was observed and acted upon by the fireman of the yard engine.

Fireman Hopkins, of yard engine 81, said that just prior to the arrival of extra 857 it became necessary for Engineman McNulty to leave the engine and go to the passenger station nearby, and that he took charge of the engine during the engineman's absence. After coupling to a cut of cars they were moved northward through the interlocking plant to track 3, being brought to a stop after the rear end of the cut had cleared the interlocking plant, and he said that at this time he saw extra 857 standing opposite his train. Shortly afterwards he saw the helper engines couple to the rear of the extra and start southward and after the extra had moved a short distance he saw a back-up signal given from a point near the rear of his own train, thinking that the extra was going through the crossover into the north yard, rather than the south yard, Fireman Hopkins said he at once began a back-up movement but had moved only a few car-lengths when he observed violent stop signals, followed almost immediately by the noise and jar of the collision.

Engineman McNulty, of engine 81, said he had gotten off the engine as it passed the passenger station a few minutes before the arrival of extra 857, leaving Fireman Hopkins in charge of the engine, he had not returned to the engine at the time of the accident. Conductor Trainor, of yard engine 81, was in the yard office at the time of the accident and could give no information concerning it.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by Fireman Hopkins moving engine 81 in obedience to a back-up signal given by Brakeman Eynon, of extra 857, which was not intended for engine 81.

Brakeman Eynon gave a back-up signal to the engineman of engine 857 but Fireman Hopkins thought it was given by a member of his own crew. Brakeman Williams, of the crew working with yard engine 81, was transmitting signals from the rear of the cut of cars being handled by his engine and should have stationed himself where he could have prevented any unauthorized movement being made. Had he done so, and had he given the proper stop signals at the instant engine 81 began the back-up movement, it is probable that this accident would not have occurred.

The bottom arm on the interlocking signal located just south of the switch leading to track 3 was in the stop position, this signal governed southbound movements from track 3, but was not high enough on the signal mast to be seen by the engine crew of engine 81. In the interests of safety this signal should be so arranged as to enable it to be seen by those whose movements it governs, and it been high enough for Fireman Hopkins to have seen it, it is very probable that the misunderstanding of signals which caused this accident would

not have resulted.

Fireman Hopkins was a qualified engineman, while all the other employees were also experienced men. At the time of the accident the crew of extra 357 had been on duty 1 hour and 31 minutes while the crew of yard engine 81 had been on duty 4 hours and 31 minutes, previous to which all of these employees had been off duty periods of 12 hours or more.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.