INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE ERIE RAILROAD AT YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, ON JULY 9, 1930.

August 7, 1930

To the Commission

On July 9, 1930, there was a rear end collision between an Erie freight train and a Pittsburgh & Lake Erie passenger train on the tracks of the Erie Railroad at Youngstown, Ohio, which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Hazelton Branch of the Mahoning Division which extends between Dry Run, near "N" Tower, and Himrod Tower, within the city limits of Youngstown, a distance of approximately 1 58 miles, and is a double-track line used jointly by the Erie Railroad and Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad under supervision of the officials of the Erie Railroad First-class trains are operated by time-table and train orders and second-class and inferior trains are operated under yard-limit rules, there being no block-signal system in use. The accident occurred at a point 1,960 feet east of "WK" Target, approaching this point from the east the track is tangent for a distance of approximately 1,200 feet, followed by a 2° curve to the right about 760 feet in length, the accident occurring at the leaving end of this curve. The grade at the point of accident is 0 31 per cent ascending for westbound trains. In the vicinity of the point of accident the tracks of the P & L. E. Railroad parallel those of the Erie Railroad on the north. Immediately north of the P. & L E tracks there is a retaining wall, an embankment and a fence which restrict the view of the point of accident from westbound trains on the Erie tracks to a distance of approximately 1,000 feet. At the time of the accident there was a train standing on the P. & L. E. eastbound main track which further restricted the view to about 330 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6 54 a. m

Description

Westbound Erie freight train 277 consisted of 73 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 4216, and was in charge of Conductor Crayton and Engineman Roxbury. At "N" Tower, 5,365 feet east of the point of accident, the crew received a clearance card indicating that all first class trains due at Youngstown had arrived and left except train No. 3 which was about 15 minutes late. Train No. 3 was a westbound train which came upon the joint track at Valley Street and came upon the route used by train 277 at Elmrod Tower. Train No. 1 was using the same route as train 277, and was scheduled to pass "N" tower at 6.50 a. m. and NYC Junction at 6 55 a. m. Train 277 departed from "N" tower at 6.43 a. m., and after stopping when the engine reached "NK" Target to proceeded and was moving at a speed variously estimated at from 3 to 8 miles per hour when it was struck by P. & L. E. train No. 1.

Westbound P. & L. E. passenger train No. 1 consisted of one combination mail and baggage car and three coaches, hauled by engine 8 35, and was in charge of Conductor Delaney and Engineman Green. This train departed from "N" Tower at 6 52 a. m., 9 minutes late, and collided with Erie train 277 while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 5 and 20 miles per hour.

The caboose of train 277 was derailed and practically demolished, and the last car in this train was slightly damaged. Engine 8675 was not derailed but sustained slight damage. The employee killed was the conductor of train 277.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Roxbury of train 277 stated that when his train was ready to depart he received a clearance card at "N" Tower, which indicated that train No. 3 was 15 minutes late. His train departed at about 6 30 a. m., and was brought to a stop when the engine reached a point about 10 or 12 car-lengths east of the safety target at "NK" Tower. He started the train again and was moving slowly, waiting for train No. 3 to pass Elmrod Tower and for the conductor to clear the signal for his train when the collision occurred, his train then was running at a speed of from 3 to 5 miles per hour. He thought at the time that the brakes had been applied by some one of the rear of the train on account of the train proceeding without the flagman as it is customary to flag when on the time of a first-class train. While he knew his train was close on the time of train No. 1 he did not whistle out a flag when the train stopped short of "NK" Target for the reason that due to the length of the train it would have been impossible for the flagman to hear the whistle.

The statements of Fireman Kalal and Head Brakeman O'Neil, of train 277, corroborated those of Engineman Roxbury as to the movement of their train prior to the accident. Brakeman O'Neil also said it was the practice for flagman to protect in the vicinity of the point of accident.

Flagman Turnbull, of train 277, stated that he has been in the service for about 18 years and is a qualified conductor, and was last examined on the rules about two or three weeks prior to the accident. His train left the P. & L. E. yard about 6.30 a. m., and passed "N" office at 6.35 or 6.40 a. m., stopped at "NK" Target about 1 minute, then proceeded and was running at a speed of 6 or 8 miles per hour when the caboose was struck by train No. 1, he had provided no flag protection at any time. As he and the conductor were working on the records he did not see the train standing on the adjoining P. & L. E. track and the first indication he received of a train approaching was when a headlight appeared about 10 or 12 car-lengths to the rear of his train. Although he and the conductor held no conversation regarding train No. 1 after passing "N" Tower he had it in mind and was aware of the time that train was due at "N" Tower and knew that his own train was then on the time of train No. 1, he knew that flagging was required within yard limits when on the time of a first class train, but he thought a clear signal indicator would be displayed at Hamrod Tower and his train would continue without stopping again. He said that in view of his train being in motion, regardless of its speed, he did not think it would be necessary to protect, and if he did go back to flag it would be hard for him to catch his train again. He had been working on this particular train for about 6 months and usually provided protection when his train was running in short time and in no instance had he been left behind. He further stated that the caboose was supplied with fusees and torpedoes and admitted that if he had dropped a lighted fusee it no doubt would have prevented the accident. He was also familiar with the rule that within yard limits where the view of an approaching train is obscured flagging is required but he did not notice the train on the adjoining track until it was too late to do so.

Engineman Green, of train No. 1, stated that the air brakes on his train functioned properly en route and that nothing unusual occurred prior to the accident. His train stopped at "N" Tower at 6 51½ and after receiving a signal to proceed his train started and had attained a speed of about 30 miles per hour when he observed the cupola of a caboose around the curve about four or five car-lengths ahead of his engine, he immediately applied the brakes in emergency but the distance was insufficient to stop the train although the speed was reduced to not more than 5 miles per

hour at the time of the accident. He said that under ordinary conditions he would have seen the train ahead in time to stop but due to the curvature of the track together with a train standing on the P & L E. eastbound main track he was prevented from seeing the caboose any sooner than he did. His train did not encounter any torpedoes, neither did he see a fusee or a flagman while approaching the point of accident, his first knowledge that a train was occupying the track was when the caboose of that train came into view. He further stated that prior to the date of the accident his train has overtaken train No. 277 between "N" Tower and Milford Junction and on all occasions that train was protected by either a flagman or a fusee, and sometimes two fusees at different points.

Fireman Burbank, of train No. 1, stated that when his train stopped at "I" Tower he noted the time to be 6.51½ a. m., and that his train started again almost immediately. He did not know that another train was preceding his own train and his first intimation of anything wrong was when the engineer applied the brakes in emergency. He leaned out of the window and looked ahead but on account of his position on the outside of the curve he did not see the caboose of train 277 until the engine had reached a point about 10 feet from it. He estimated the speed of his train at the time of the emergency brake application at 30 miles per hour and at the time of the accident at 10 miles per hour.

Engineman Kaar, of train No. 1, stated that his train left "N" Tower at 6.52 a. m., and about 2½ minutes later he felt an emergency application of the brakes at which time he thought the train was traveling at a speed of about 50 miles per hour which was reduced to about 20 miles per hour at the time of the accident.

Conductor Delaney, of train No. 1, stated that the train departed from "N" Tower at 6.52 a. m., and was running at a speed of about 50 miles per hour just prior to the accident. He looked at his watch as soon as the collision occurred and it was then 6.54 a. m.

Dispatcher Fuller stated that train No. 277 is scheduled to leave the P & L E. yard at 6 00 a. m., and that on the day of the accident it was reported ready for departure at 6 05 a. m.; he immediately issued a clearance through the office at "N" Tower showing train No. 3 was about 15 minutes late. He said there is no specified time for permitting freight trains from the P & L E. railroad to enter the tracks of the Erie Railroad, the dispatchers generally using their own judgment providing, of course, that they are not too close ahead of passenger trains. He was not in

charge of train movements at the time train No. 1 passed "N" Tower and had made no provision for the crew of that train to be notified that there was a freight train ahead of it as it is not customary to do so at that point.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by failure to provide flag protection, for which Conductor Croytor and Flagman Turnbull were responsible.

The rules provide that when a train is stopped or delayed under certain tenders in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman is required to go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection. Conductors are required to know that their flagmen go out promptly when necessary to flag. In yard limits protection is required when on the time of a first-class train and when the view is obscured or in foggy or stormy weather

According to the statements of Flagman Turnbull he was familiar with the rules requiring flag protection and knew the scheduled running time of train No. 1 in that vicinity, and also that his own train was on the time of that train, yet he made no attempt to provide protection of any kind until he observed the superior train approaching only a short distance away, it was then too late to prevent the accident. His only excuse for not protecting was that he was of the opinion that as long as the train was in motion it was unnecessary to do so and that if he had gotten off to flag he would have had difficulty in getting his train again. He admitted, however, that there was a supply of fusees and torpedoes available in the caboose and that had he thrown off a burning fusee before rounding the curve on which the accident occurred the collision probably would have been averted. Why Conductor Croytor failed to see to it that his train was not properly protected is not known as he was killed in the accident.

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