

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE GEORGIA RAILROAD NEAR AUGUSTA, GA., ON MAY 9, 1924.

May 27, 1924.

To the Commission.

On May 9, 1924, there was a head-end collision between a work train and a freight train on the Georgia Railroad near Augusta, Ga., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 10 employees.

#### Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the main line of the Georgia Railroad, which extends between Augusta and Atlanta, Ga., a distance of 170.87 miles and which in the vicinity of the point of accident is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The point of accident was 292 feet east of the west yard-limit board of Harrisonville Yard, the principal yard of this railroad at Augusta. Approaching the point of accident from the east the track is tangent for more than 1 mile, followed by a  $3^{\circ}$  curve to the right 3,358 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve at a point 82 feet from its western end; approaching from the west the track is tangent for 2,068 feet followed by a  $3^{\circ}$  curve to the right 1,418 feet in length, and is then tangent 591 feet to the curve on which the collision occurred. The grade is slightly descending for eastbound trains, being 0.6 per cent at the point of accident. The weather was clear at the time of the accident which occurred at 8.25 a.m.

#### Description

Eastbound freight train extra 321 consisted of 59 cars and a coach used as a caboose, hauled by engine 321, and was in charge of Conductor Jordan and Engineman Chandler. It departed from Atlanta, Ga., at 4.15 p.m., May 8, and was delayed en route about five hours by a derailment caused by a broken wheel on one of the cars in the train. It passed Belair, approximately 5 miles west of the point of accident and the last open office, at 8.00 a.m., without having received any orders relative to work extra 200, and collided with the work extra in Harrisonville Yard while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 10 or 12 miles an hour.

Work extra 200 consisted of three cars and a coach used as a caboose, hauled by engine 200, and was in charge of Conductor Haukland and Engineman Bowden. At Harrisonville the crew received a copy of train order No. 14, Form 31, reading as follows

"Eng 200 works eight 800 am to seven 700 pm between Harrisonville and Belair protecting against Extra 321 East. No 18 of May 9th is annulled Atlanta to Harrisonville."

This order was made complete at 7.46 a.m., and extra 200 left Harrisonville at about 8.15 a.m., without flag protection and collided with extra 321 shortly afterwards while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been from 10 to 25 miles an hour.

Both engines remained upright on the rails, engine 200 being badly damaged, while engine 321 sustained only slight damage to its front end. Twelve cars in various parts of extra 321 were derailed and damaged, several of them being turned over, none of the cars in the work train was materially damaged. The employee killed was a track laborer riding on the work extra.

#### Summary of evidence

Dispatcher Tucker on duty until 8 a.m., said that after issuing the work order he informed the operator at Harrisonville that extra 321 should arrive about 8.20 or 8.25 a.m., and he did not consider it necessary to give train order No. 14 to extra 321 as at the time the order was put out that train was expected to arrive at Harrisonville before the work extra had departed. He was familiar with the rule requiring extra trains running through working limits to have a copy of the work orders and admitted that he failed to comply with this rule in this instance.

Operator Alston, who was on duty at Harrisonville at the time of the accident stated that train order No. 14 was among those transferred to him by the operator whom he relieved at 7 a.m. He said Conductor Haukland read the order aloud and then signed it and also inquired as to the time extra 321 was expected to arrive which information he gave him. He said Conductor Haukland did not register the time of the departure of his train, nor did he request that this be done by the operator, as is sometimes done.

Conductor Haukland, of work extra 200, stated that he received his orders and clearance from Operator Alston and upon reading train order No 14 he understood that it required him to protect against extra 321 immediately. Upon

inquiry he was informed that that train was expected to arrive at about 8.20 a.m. He then left the office and met Engineman Bowden near the yard office, delivered the orders and a copy of the clearance card, and at the same time informed him of the expected arrival of extra 321, the engineman then reading the orders aloud and signing the clearance card. The conductor said he did not complete the register in the operator's office as he intended to return and fill in the departing time of his train after extra 321 had arrived. Train No. 10 passed Harrisonville at about 8.03 a.m., after which the yardmaster told him to move his train from the track upon which it was standing as it was blocking a switch engine, whereupon he told the engineman to move westward and pick up the sectionmen who were working in the vicinity of the water tank, and then to pull ahead and wait for extra 321, it being his intention to wait at White's Switch, about 300 yards farther west, for that train; instead of doing this, however, his train pulled ahead, loaded the sectionmen and their tools, and departed. He handed the orders to the flagman shortly after the train left, and as his train was nearing the yard-limit board it occurred to him that he had overlooked extra 321 and he immediately attempted to stop the train, but being unfamiliar with the location of the conductor's emergency valve and cord in this particular coach and being excited at the time, he was unable to locate it, the collision occurring a few seconds afterwards. He estimated the speed of the train at the time of the collision at from 10 to 15 miles an hour, and was of the opinion that the speed was such that had the air brakes been applied in emergency the train could have been brought to a stop within range of vision.

Engineman Bowden's statements agree with those of Conductor Haukland, except that he estimated the speed of his train at the time of the collision at from 20 to 25 miles an hour. He further stated that he failed to see train No. 10 pass Harrisonville and upon being informed by the fireman and members of the train crew that it had passed, he proceeded, and attributed his overlooking extra 321 to the fact that his mind was occupied thinking about train No. 10.

Fireman Sims stated that he did not know what orders Engineman Bowden had as he could neither read nor write and the engineman did not read the orders to him, but he understood Engineman Bowden to say that they had a wait order for train No. 10 in Harrisonville yard, and that after it passed they would pull out and run extra to Mile Post 8 and start stringing rail. He did not know anything about the order to protect against extra 321. He estimated the speed of his train to have been about 15 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

The testimony of Brake man Galpine and Flagman Beasley of the work extra corroborated that of the other members of the crew, each stated that he did not know what orders were received prior to the departure of the train from Harrisonville. Flagman Beasley stated that he gave the signal to proceed after picking up the sectionmen, that Conductor Haukland handed him the orders after departing from Harrisonville and that he had not finished reading them when brakeman Galpine came into the coach and asked for them, he handed the orders to Galpine, who was reading train order No. 14, aloud when the conductor, apparently excited, jumped up and tried to locate the emergency valve cord, the accident occurring before he could do so.

Conductor Jordan, of extra 321, stated that he had no notice of work extra 200, that his train was running unusually slow and that speed was further reduced approaching the yard limits, he estimated it to have been about 10 or 12 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

Engineman Chandler, of extra 321, stated that his train was slowed down to 10 or 12 miles an hour by an air-brake application when approaching the yard-limit board, and that shortly after he had released the brakes, about at the yard-limit board, he heard a whistle, looked out of the cab window, saw the work extra about 25 feet distant, and again applied the air brake.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the operation of work extra 200 against extra 321 without proper protection, for which Conductor Haukland and Engineman Bowden are responsible.

The train order received by the crew of work extra 200 stated that they were to protect themselves against extra 321, and both the conductor and engineman understood the order; each of them, however, forgot extra 321, the engineman because he was thinking of train No. 10, and the conductor for some reason not explained. The other members of the crew had not seen the orders received before leaving Harrisonville, and upon these two employees, therefore, rests the primary responsibility for the occurrence of this accident.

Dispatcher Wicker is open to criticism for his failure to furnish a copy of the work order to the crew of extra 321. His failure to do so was due to the fact that he expected extra 321 to arrive at the terminal before work extra 200 departed. The rule, however, is explicit, and provides in part as follows.

"When an order has been given to 'work' between designated points, no other extra shall be authorized to run over that part of the track without provision for passing the 'work' extra".

This accident undoubtedly would have been prevented had an adequate automatic train-control system been in use on this railroad.

The employees involved, with the exception of the fireman of extra 321, were experienced men. The crew of extra 321 had been on duty 17 hours and 10 minutes at the time of the accident, having been delayed 5 hours and 10 minutes en route on account of a broken wheel on one of the cars in the train. None of the other employees involved had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director.