

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY AT ISLAND POND, VT., ON MARCH 28, 1923.

April 14, 1923.

To the Commission:

On March 28, 1923, there was a side collision between a freight train and a yard engine on the Grand Trunk Railway at Island Pond, Vt., which resulted in the death of one employee.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on the sub-division extending between Richmond, P. Q., and Island Pond, which is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred in the western end of the yard, at the east end of the crossover connecting the main track with No. 1 lead track. Approaching this point from the west there is a curve of  $2^{\circ}$  to the right which is 759 feet in length, followed by 908 feet of tangent to the point of accident. Approaching from the east the track leads to the right on a curve of  $5^{\circ}$ , followed by about 150 feet of tangent to the point of accident.

At a point 1,325 feet west of the point of accident is a one-arm semaphore signal, manually operated from a switch shanty in the vicinity of the crossover. This signal is not connected with any of the switches and is known as a station protection signal and governs eastbound movements only; the station is about half a mile east of the signal. The operation of this signal is governed by rule 551 of the Operating Rules and General Regulations, which rule reads as follows:

"A train finding a station protection signal indicating stop, must stop before passing it, and may proceed with extreme caution, sending a Flagman ahead if necessary for complete protection, and expecting to find a train moving in either direction."

Rule 93 allows the main track to be used within yard limits, keeping clear of first and second-class trains, all other trains must approach and pass through yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear. At the time of the accident 6 p.m., there was a heavy snow, accompanied by a high wind.

### Description.

Yard engine 450, in charge of Engine Foreman<sup>e</sup> Young and Engineman Foss, was making up a westbound train and in doing the switching it was necessary for the engine, which was headed west and coupled to a cut of 22 cars, to proceed through the crossover leading to the main track, it was while this movement was being made that the engine collided with train No. 554, while traveling at a speed of about 6 miles an hour.

Eastbound third-class freight train No. 554 consisted of four cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1018, and was in charge of Conductor Turgeon and Engineman Kerr. It was due at Island Pond at 1 p.m., but it was 5.50 p.m. when it came to a stop at the station protection signal, which was displaying a stop indication. The train then proceeded to within two car lengths of the west crossover switch and again stopped, while the head brakeman went to the switch shanty to find out on what track the train was to be placed. On his return he closed the west crossover switch, which had been left open by the switch crew, and the train then started to move ahead on the main track at a speed of about 6 miles an hour, and was struck by engine 450.

The left side of the front end of engine 450 struck the left forward corner of the tender of engine 1018, turning the tender over to the right and practically demolishing the car immediately behind it. Engine 450 was not derailed or materially damaged. The employee killed was the fireman of train No. 554.

### Summary of evidence.

Engineman Foss said that as his engine was proceeding toward the crossover, he was given a violent stop signal by a man about a car length ahead and at once applied the air brakes in emergency, the collision occurring immediately afterwards. He did not hear a bell or whistle signal, and said that the air brakes on the cars his engine was handling were not coupled, and that the running in of the slack pushed his engine ahead to some extent. He further stated that as far as he knew, the fireman was on his seat box, and had given no warning of the approach of train No. 554. He estimated that he could see only about a car length on account of the storm. Engine Foreman Young had relayed from the rear of the cut of cars to the engine the signal for the movement which was being made at the time of the accident. Both of these employees stated they had been using the crossover in switching movements and had left the switches lined for such movements, while the station protection signal was placed in the stop position to provide protection. They also stated that the crossover was last used by them 20 or 30 minutes previous to the occurrence of the accident. En-

gineman Foss said he had no knowledge that the position of the west switch had been changed, and both he and the engine foreman considered that the placing of the station protection signal in the stop position afforded them absolute protection when using the main track. Fireman Lavoie said he was on his seat box looking ahead, but was unable to see anything on account of the storm, and the first he knew of anything wrong was when the air brakes were applied in emergency; he did not hear any bell or whistle signals.

Engineman Kerr, of train No. 554, said that after stopping at the station protection signal, Head Brakeman Thibadeau went ahead to ascertain on what track the train was to be placed, and then returned to the engine, after closing the west crossover switch for the movement on the main track. He said he then sounded two blasts on the whistle and proceeded slowly and did not know there was anything wrong until the left side of the tender of his engine was struck by yard engine 450. He said that he was handling his train according to the rules, that the track ahead was clear, the bell ringing, and that he was maintaining a careful lookout; he had not noticed what the fireman and head brakeman were doing. Head Brakeman Thibadeau said that after finding out on what track the train was to be placed, he lined the west crossover switch for the movement on the main track and then boarded the engine. He said he was standing in front of the firebox as the train pulled ahead, that shortly afterwards Engineman Kerr heard another engine and asked if it was coming toward them, the brakeman said he then got off on the fireman's side and saw engine 450 coming through the crossover, that he then crossed over to the engineman's side of that engine and gave stop signals, but he did not think his signals were observed on account of the storm. The last he saw of the fireman, he was standing on the engineman's side of the engine. Conductor Turgeon and Brakemen Christie and Couture were in the caboose, according to the conductor he heard two blasts on a whistle, there being a considerable interval between them, shortly after which the accident occurred.

#### Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Kerr and Head Brakeman Thibadeau, of train No. 554, to take proper precautions for the safe movement of their train.

Under rule 551, a train can pass a station protection signal in stop position only with extreme caution, sending a flagman ahead when necessary. The adverse weather conditions prevailing required flag protection within the meaning of this rule. These employees knew that the crossover was or had been recently in use in connection with other movements, and Head Brakeman Thibadeau should have provided flag

protection for his train while passing that point. Head Brakeman Thibadeau also exercised poor judgment in closing the west crossover switch without closing the east switch, had he closed both crossover switches, this accident would not have occurred. Engineman Kerr should have seen to it that flag protection was provided or that both of the crossover switches were closed before proceeding, in order to insure the safe movement of his train, and for this failure he is equally responsible with the head brakeman.

The evidence also indicates that the head brakeman and fireman on engine 1018 were not maintaining a proper lookout. The engineman was looking out on his side of the engine, but the head brakeman was on the deck of the engine, and he said the fireman was on the engineman's side. Had either of these employees been looking out on the left side of the engine, it is possible they might have seen yard engine 450 approaching in time to prevent the accident.

The employees at fault were experienced men, and at the time of the accident had been on duty about 11-1/2 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.