

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN
RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED
ON THE GULF, COLORADO & SANTA FE RAILWAY AT
TEXAS CITY JUNCTION, TEXAS, ON NOVEMBER 7, 1928.

January 3, 1929.

TO THE COMMISSION.

On November 7, 1928, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railway at Texas City Junction, Texas, resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the First District of the Galveston Division extending between Galveston and Bellville Yard, Texas, a distance of 106.2 miles; in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. This accident occurred within yard limits, at a point 2,653 feet south of the station and 6,755 feet north of the south yard-limit board. Approaching this point from the south the track is tangent for a distance of approximately 3 miles. At the point of accident the track is on a slight fill and the grade is .175 per cent ascending for north-bound trains.

Rule 93 of the Rules and Regulations of the Operating Department of this railroad reads in part as follows:

"Within yard limits all trains and engines may use main track, not protecting against second or third class trains or extra trains, but will give way as soon as possible upon their approach. All except first-class trains will move within yard limits at restricted speed, the responsibility for accident with respect to second or third class or extra trains rests with the approaching train."

The weather was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 7.05 a.m.

Description

Northbound freight train extra 944 consisted of 81 cars and a caboose, hauled by AT&SF engine 944, and was in charge of Conductor Troy and Engineman Marchand. This train left 59th Street Yard, Galveston, at 5.40 a.m., arrived at Texas City Junction, 8.8 miles from the yard, at 6.20 a.m.; after the head car was set out and 36 cars were picked up the train was about to depart when its rear end was struck by extra 1907.

Northbound freight train extra 1907 consisted of 19 cars and a caboose, hauled by AT&SF engine 1907, and was in charge of Conductor Scales and Engineman Einecke. This train left 59th Street Yard, Galveston, at 6.35 a.m. and collided with the rear end of extra 944 at Texas City Junction while traveling at an estimated speed of from 18 to 20 miles per hour.

The caboose and five rear cars of extra 944 were derailed and, with the exception of the fifth car ahead of the caboose, were badly wrecked. The engine, the first four cars and front truck of the fifth car of extra 1907 were derailed to the right, the engine coming to rest on its right side 265 feet from the point of accident. Both engine and tender were considerably damaged and the first two of the derailed cars were demolished. The employee killed was the fireman of extra 1907.

Summary of evidence.

Conductor Troy, of extra 944, stated that his train was ready to depart from Texas City Junction when from his position near the head end of the train he heard extra 1907 approaching, working steam and apparently traveling at a speed of 30 or 40 miles per hour. He called to his flagman, who was about 10 car-lengths south of where the conductor was standing, but the flagman had started running toward the rear end and was soon lost to view in the fog. Conductor Troy took out his watch and waited for the crash to come, but although he did not hear a sound he saw the car wheels move ahead a few inches and noted that it was then 7.05 a.m. It also appeared from the conductor's statements that the fog was sufficiently dense to limit his view of his flagman to 10 or 12 car-lengths.

The statements of the other members of the crew of extra 944, none of whom was at the rear end of the train when the accident occurred, brought out no additional facts of importance.

Engineman Einecke, of extra 1907, stated that when he departed from Galveston he knew that extra 944 was not very far ahead of his own train. He became lost in the fog, however, and did not know when he passed the yard-limit board nor did he know when he went over Highland Bayou Bridge located about 2,200 feet inside the yard-limit board. The first he knew as to his location was when he saw the station board about two-thirds of a mile from the point of accident, and he said he immediately shut off to a strong drifting throttle and made a 10-pound application of the air brakes which he held continuously until he saw the caboose, when it was only three or four car-lengths distant, he then applied the brakes in emergency, and he estimated that by this time he had reduced the speed to about 18 or 20 miles per hour.

Engineman Einecke was thoroughly familiar with the provisions of rule 93 and realized that he would have to be looking out for the train ahead of him, and he said he probably passed the yard-limit board at about the time he looked at the lubricator; he had been paying particular attention to the lubricator in order to regulate it, this being due to the fact that some work had just been done on the engine and he did not want to overheat the right cylinder. It further appeared from the engineman's statements that the brakes on the train worked satisfactorily at all times.

Head Brakeman Priesmuth was standing in the gangway of the engine with his back to the boiler, drying his clothes, when the engineman called a warning, the accident occurring a few seconds afterwards, at which time according to his estimate the speed of the train was 20 or 25 miles per hour. His other statements developed no additional facts.

Conductor Scales, of extra 1907, who had been working at his desk in the caboose, said he did not remember passing over Highland Bayou Bridge but when he thought they were getting close to Texas City Junction he got up in the cupola, on the left side, looked out the window, saw a car-limit sign and remarked to the brakeman, who was riding on the right side, that they were traveling too fast; he estimated the speed to have been about 30 miles per hour. He made an application of the air brakes by pulling the conductor's valve and

had reduced the speed to about 20 miles per hour when the accident occurred. He looked at his watch when the train stopped and it was then 7.05 a.m. Conductor Scales also stated that he had entrusted to the engine-man the entire handling of the train so far as speed was concerned.

Rear Brakeman Miller, of extra 1907, stated that he was riding on the right side of the cupola and could see objects that were close to the track along the right of way but could not see any distance. He did not remember seeing the yard-limit board but knew he was inside the yard limits when they crossed over Highland Bayou Bridge, traveling at a speed of about 20 miles per hour. He stated that the conductor had been riding in the cupola from a point about half way between Virginia Point and Highland Bayou Bridge, which are about 3 miles apart, and they were talking about the dense fog when the conductor applied the brakes.

Roundhouse Foreman Gay stated that engine 1907 was held in the Galveston Shops for repairs about October 8. Both valves were drawn and examined; the pistons were drawn and cylinder packing examined and bull ring and cylinder packing renewed on the right side of the engine. The valve gear bushings, pins, and links were worn and new links and link blocks were put in. Certain rod work was done, such as renewing knuckle bushings and lining down the front end of the main rods, but no repairs were made to the lubricator or the feed pipes. On examining the engine at the point of accident he found the throttle closed, the reverse lever about four notches ahead the center, and both brake valves in emergency position.

Locomotive 1907 is of the 2-8-0 type and is an oil burner. This was its first trip after having had minor repairs made at Galveston, and other than the reverse gear working a little stiff it appeared that it was in good mechanical condition at the time the accident occurred.

Conclusions

This accident was caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Einecke, of extra 1907, properly to control the speed of his train within yard limits.

Under rule 93 all except first-class trains are required to move within yard limits at restricted speed, the responsibility for accident with respect to second or third-class or extra trains rests with the approaching train.

Engineman Einecke said he was lost in the fog until he passed the station board at Texas City Junction, at which time he made a 10-pound brake-pipe reduction, and according to his own statement the speed was still as high as 18 or 20 miles per hour when he saw the rear of extra 944, approximately two-thirds of a mile beyond the station board. In view of the fact that weather was extremely foggy he should have been running with extreme caution, instead of operating his train for a distance of more than 1 mile within yard limits at an excessive rate of speed, particularly in view of the fact that he knew extra 944 was only a short distance ahead of him.

Conductor Scales stated that he was working at his desk and it was not until after his train had passed the yard-limit board and the bridge that he knew his location and began to take steps toward bringing the train under proper control by opening the conductor's valve, the accident occurring very shortly afterwards. Had he been paying proper attention to the operation of his train, or had the head brakeman been on the alert and reminded the engineman as to the location of their train, it would have been possible to have prevented the occurrence of this accident.

All of 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. B. Berland,

Director.