INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD AT AMBOY, ILL., ON DECEMBER 23, 1922.

January 9, 1923.

To the Commission

On December 23, 1922, there was a head-end collision between a work train and a light engine on the Illinois Central Railroad at Amboy, Ill., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of four employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on the Amboy District of the Wisconsin Division, which extends between Freeport and Clinton, Ill. At the point of accident it 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 within yard limits, 185 feet north of the end of double track, approaching this point from each direction the track is tangent for some distance, and the grade is about 0.5 per cent descending for northbound trains. It was dark and misty at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 6.45 a.m.

Description.

Engine 2909, in charge of Engineman Nelson, had arrived at Amboy with a southbound freight train, and after pulling into the south yard, on the east side of the main track, had been cut off from its train, headed out on the southbound main track, and was backed northward on that track, enroute to the roundhouse. Just after it had passed the switch at the north end of double-track, which is required to be kept lined for the southbound track, the engine collided with work extra 401.

Work Extra 401 consisted of a caboose, one flat car, and a derrick car, in the order named, hauled by engine 401, and was in charge of Conductor Perkins and Engineman Clem. This train, originating at Amboy and en route to Mendota, 16.01 miles distant, was proceeding southward over the single-track section at a speed estimated by the train crew to have been 7 or 8 miles

an hour when it collided with engine 2909.

Only one pair of wheels under engine 2909 was derailed, but the tender of engine 401 was derailed and forced against the boiler head of the engine, while its rear end telescoped the head end of the caboose, the rear end of which came to rest on the flat car immediately following it. The employee killed was the fireman of the work extra.

Summary of evidence.

Engineman Nelson, of engine 2909, said the engine was drifting at a speed of 6 or 8 miles an hour when he saw green markers approaching which he supposed to belong to a northbound train which had come into the north yard as his own train had pulled into the south yard, and which for some reason was backing out on the main track, and he said he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, bringing the engine nearly to a stop before the collision occurred. The markers he had seen were on the caboose of the work extra, and he was positive that neither the headlight nor classification lights of engine 401 were burning. He said he had been unable to see the markers any sooner on account of smoke and steam, also that the light on the rear of the tender of his engine was burning, as he could see its reflection on the track. Head Brakeman Hannah thought the speed was only 4 or 5 miles an hour when he saw the markers on the caboose of work extra 401 and said the collision occurred before he had time to warn the engineman. Brakeman Hannan verified Engineman Nelson's statement that the headlight on engine 401 was not burning, and also said the light on the tender of his own engine was burning. Flagman Lester, who was near the rear end of the train of 82 cars hauled into Arboy by engine 2909, said he had seen the light on the tender, although it was about 50 car lengths distant. None of the other members of this crew was in position to know anything of the events leading up to the occurrence of the accident.

The only employees on engine 401 at the time of the accident were the engineman and fireman, the latter was killed, while the injuries sustained by the engineman were such that no statement could be obtained from him at the time of this investigation. Conductor Perkins said that when the engine came from the roundhouse the headlight and classification lights were burning, and that he had seen the reflection of the headlight at the time the train pulled out on the lead track connecting the north yard with the main track, the switch where this lead track connects with the main track is about 3,000 feet from the point of accident. Head Brakeman Armstrong said that when he threw the switch for the train to move out on the main track he noticed that the headlight

was burning, although not very brightly; after closing the switch he boarded the caboose. Conductor Perkins estimated the speed at the time of the collision to have been 7 or 8 miles an hour, while the brakeman thought it was 5 or 6 miles an hour. Each of these employees said there was no application of the air brakes prior to the collision. The statements of all employees indicated that the weather conditions were not such as to interfere materially with their vision.

Conclusions.

This accident is believed to have been caused primarily by the failure of Engineman Clem, of work extra 401, to maintain a proper lookout of the track ahead.

The statements of the train crew of work extra 401 that there was no application of the air brakes prior to the accident indicates that Engineman Clem did not see the approach of engine 2909 prior to the occurrence of the accident. Had he been maintaining a proper lookout, and operated his train under proper control within yard limits, prepared to stop unless the main track was seen or known to be clear, as required by the rules, he should have been able to see engine 2909 in time to bring his train to a stop before the collision.

Enginemen Clem and Nelson were employed as firemen in 1913 and promoted to enginemen in 1918. The crew of work extra 401 had been on duty less than an hour, after $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours off duty, the crew of engine 2909 had been on duty $5\frac{1}{4}$ hours, after off-duty periods ranging from 42 hours to several days.

Respectfully submitted,

W P. BORLAND,

Director.