

January 12, 1915.

In Re investigation of accident which
occurred on the Illinois Central
Railroad at Central City, Ky.,
on December 13, 1914.

Inv-238

On December 13, 1914, there was a head-end collision on the Illinois Central Railroad at Central City, Ky., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of five employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Freight train No. 151 had been made up by locomotive No. 1593 in the yard at Central City. After completing this work, the locomotive, which was in charge of Engineman Evitts and Fireman Murphy, headed out on to the main track from a cross-over at the rear of the train and was proceeding in a southerly direction to the opposite end of the yard in order to back in and couple to the head-end of the train, when it collided with northbound extra 1695, which was entering the yard on the main line.

Northbound extra 1695, at the time of the accident, consisted only of a caboose hauled by locomotive No. 1695, in charge of Conductor Robertson and Engineman Trantham. It was bound from Paducah, Ky., to Central City. The cars hauled by extra 1695 were set off at Graham and the locomotive proceeded toward Central City with the caboose. It left Graham, which was the last open telegraph office and is located about 12 miles from the point of accident, at 6.08 p.m. and collided with locomotive No. 1593 at about 6.30 p.m.

The engine of locomotive No. 1593 was derailed, while the tender buckled against the engine, allowing the cistern to slide forward, fatally injuring Conductor Jenkins. The tender wheels were not derailed, neither was locomotive No. 1695 derailed. The front end of each locomotive was badly damaged.

This division of the Illinois Central Railroad is a single-track line. No block signal system is in use, trains being run by train orders and time-card rights. The grade is nearly 1% descending for southbound trains. The accident occurred near the middle of a curve of 6 degrees leading to the left for southbound trains, this curve being about 1,500 feet in length. The view was much obscured by a bank 10 or 15 feet in height on the inside of the curve, while the weather at the time was bad, snow falling, with a high wind.

Operating rule No. 93 of the Illinois Central Railroad provides as follows:

"Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first-class trains. Second and third-class trains, and extras, must move within yard limits prepared to stop, unless the main track is seen or known to be clear."

The speed of engines operating on the main line between Paducah and Central City, with only a caboose attached, is restricted to 30 miles per hour. Extra 1695 covered the distance of 12 miles from Graham in 23 minutes, moving at an average speed of about 31 miles per hour. Freight train No. 151 was scheduled to leave Central City at 6.30 p.m. and extra 1695 is believed to have passed the switch at which trains usually leave the main track and enter the yard, at about 6.30 p.m., or a few seconds there after.

Engineman Trantham stated that at Graham the conductor said they had 22 minutes in which to reach Central City and clear train No. 151, and asked him if they could do so. The engineman replied that he did not know, but would go as far as he could. Approaching the south switch at Central City, the fireman looked at his watch and remarked that they still had about two minutes to clear No. 151. Instead of entering the siding at the south switch he decided to continue into the

yard on the main track. Engineman Trantham claimed that he then sounded the whistle for the road crossing near which the accident occurred and, as his engine rounded the curve, he saw the reflection of the headlight of locomotive No. 1593. At that time he did not know whether or not it was on the main track and when he saw that it was, it was only one or two car lengths distant and he at once applied the emergency air brakes, the collision occurring about 100 feet north of the road crossing, and about 1680 feet from the south switch. He did not think the speed of his train at the time of the collision was over 5 miles per hour. Engineman Trantham said that although they were required by the rules to clear superior trains at least 5 minutes, it was the custom to use this 5 minutes when coming into a yard and everyone expected that this time would be so used. He further stated that the accident occurred at exactly 6.29 p. m.

Fireman Denton did not know anything was wrong until Engineman Trantham applied the brakes, the collision occurring almost immediately afterwards. He thought it was 6.28 p.m. or 6.29 p.m., but did not know definitely. He said that the speed of his train was about 7 miles per hour. As they approached the south switch he told the engineman that they had about 2 minutes to spare on train No. 151 and asked him what he was going to do, the engineman replying that he was going up the main line. Leavin Graham, Fireman Denton knew that they did not have sufficient time to reach Central City and clear train No. 151 at least 5 minutes, as required by the rule, and at the same time comply with the speed restriction of 30 miles per hour, but stated that he said nothing to the engineman about it.

Conductor Robertson, who was riding in the caboose, stated that the speed was 6 or 7 miles per hour at the south switch. It was

customary not to clear trains 5 minutes when coming in to a terminal, although he stated that instructions to that effect had never been received. He had just finished his reports and on looking out of the window, saw the headlight of locomotive No. 1593, the collision occurring immediately thereafter.

Flagman Albert stated that when approaching Central City, he told the conductor that he did not think they could reach that point for train No. 151, but the conductor made no reply.

Engineman Evitts, of locomotive No. 1593, stated that as his locomotive was approaching the south switch the fireman said that a train was approaching and he at once applied the air brakes, the speed at the time being from 6 to 8 miles per hour. He had just brought his locomotive to a stop and looked out of the window when the collision occurred, between 6.30 p.m. and 6.31 p.m. He further stated that his view was limited to about two car lengths, while that of his fireman was restricted to 6 or 7 car lengths.

Fireman Murphy, of engine No. 1593, stated the speed of his locomotive was about 8 miles per hour when he saw extra 1695 approaching, and he at once notified the engineman. His engine had been stopped or brought nearly to a stop before the collision occurred.

Flagman Cooley, of train No. 151, was about 200 yards north of the point of collision when locomotive No. 1593 passed him on its way to the switch for the purpose of backing in and coupling to the train. It was then between 6.29 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. He thought the speed of the locomotive was about 4 or 5 miles per hour when it passed him. Just after it had gone he heard the northbound extra approaching and thought that it had slowed up at the south switch, as he heard the engine begin to work steam, and immediately afterward the collision occurred.

This accident was caused by extra 1695 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train, for which Engineman Trantham and Conductor Robertson are responsible. In so occupying the main track, the crew in charge violated rule No. 87, which reads as follows:

"An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

"Extra trains must clear the time of regular trains not less than five minutes unless otherwise provided, and will be governed by train orders with respect to other extras."

When leaving Graham it was 6.08 p.m., while train No. 151 was due to leave Central City at 6.30 p.m. The crew of extra 1695 therefore knew that they had only 17 minutes in which to reach Central City and clear train No. 151 the 5 minutes required by rule No. 87, above quoted. To have done this would have required an average speed of about 46 miles per hour, which would have been materially in excess of the 30 miles per hour speed restriction. From the statements of the employees, however, it appears that when approaching a terminal yard it was not customary to observe that part of rule No. 87 requiring extras to clear the time of regular trains not less than 5 minutes.

The crew of extra 1695 are also at fault for their failure to comply with the provisions of rule No. 93, previously referred to. Considering the weather conditions prevailing, the sharp curve around which their train was proceeding, as well as the fact that they knew they were on the time of train No. 151, unusual precautions should have been taken to move within these yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track was seen or known to be clear.

Engineman Trantham was employed as a fireman in 1899 and was made an engineman in 1902. In 1904 he was suspended for 30 days on two occasions, once for responsibility in connection with a collision and

once for responsibility in connection with running a block. Since that time his record was clear.

Conductor Robertson was employed as a flagman in 1904 and was suspended for 15 days in 1905 for responsibility in connection with a collision. In 1909 he was promoted to the position of conductor. Since 1905 his record was good.

The members of the crew of extra 1695 had been on duty 8 hours and 30 minutes after a period off duty of nearly 16 hours.

This accident once more calls attention to the fact that on many railroads the rules governing the operation of trains are not properly obeyed by the employees or enforced by the officials. In this case the statements of the employees indicated that that part of rule No. 87 requiring inferior trains to clear superior trains by at least 5 minutes was habitually disregarded when approaching a terminal. Until employees obey the rules governing the operation of trains, and until the officials enforce such rules, accidents may be expected to occur.