

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 NEAR CENTRALIA, ILL., ON APRIL 16, 1924

May 22, 1924.

To the Commission:

On April 16, 1924, there was a side collision between a light engine and a switch engine on the Illinois Central Railroad near Centralia, Ill., resulting in the death of two employees.

Location and method of operation.

The point of collision is about 2.7 miles south of the station at Centralia, near the south end of what is known as "E" yard; this yard is composed of numerous tracks, numbered consecutively from west to east, situated between and parallel to the northbound and southbound main tracks. The yard is divided into two units, east and west, each unit having a lead track extending from southwest to northeast.

The lead tracks join at a point about 100 feet south of the southern end of yard track 1. The yard track switches, which are of the manually-operated ground type, lead off from the lead track to the north and are facing-point switches for northbound movements; the switchstands are east of the lead track. The accident occurred in the west unit of the yard, between yard tracks 4 and 5, immediately over the frog of the switch leading to yard track 4. Approaching this point from the south, beginning at the junction of the lead tracks, the west yard lead track is tangent. The grade is level. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 1.47 p.m.

Description.

Switch engine 1825, headed north, in charge of Engine Foreman Moreland and Engineman Shanks, was hauling two cars from yard track 5, and while backing out upon the lead track at a low rate of speed the left rear corner of the tender collided with the tender of engine 1958.

Engine 1958, headed south, in charge of Engineman Taggoner, left the roundhouse at 1.35 p.m. On reaching the junction of the lead tracks a back-up movement was made over the west yard lead track for the purpose of coupling to a train which was standing on yard track 4, and while backing in on this yard track at a speed of about 3 or 4 miles an hour the left rear corner of the tender collided with the tender of switch engine 1825.

Neither engine was derailed. Both tenders were slightly damaged and one side of the cab of engine 1958 was torn off. The employee killed was the fireman of engine 1958, while the engineman of this engine received injuries from which he died several days after the accident.

Summary of evidence.

Engine Foreman Moreland, of engine 1825, stated that his engine after coupling to the two cars on yard track 5 was about two car lengths into clear; before starting to back out of this track he saw engine 1958, 12 or 13 car lengths from the switch; this was the last time he saw engine 1958 prior to the accident. He was riding on the front foot board of the switch engine, on the right side, at the time of the accident. Foreman Moreland stated that he did not look to see where engine 1958 was before giving Engineman Shanks a signal to back out of yard track 5; that he was of the impression engine 1958 was to get its train from yard track 5; that as a general thing the engineman or fireman ascertains that the lead track is clear before backing out upon it; that he thought the switch engine would be out on the lead track before the light engine arrived; and that the view of the lead track was unobstructed from the fireman's side of the cab in this instance.

Engineman Shanks, of engine 1825, stated that when he started to back out of yard track 5 and his engine was about a car length from the lead track, he noticed the fireman was on the deck of the engine and he told him to look and see if the route was clear. Just as the fireman looked he gave warning of danger and Engineman Shanks immediately applied the brakes, the accident occurring just before the engine stopped. Engineman Shanks said he knew that the light engine was in the vicinity of the switch but from his side of the cab he could not see the lead track south of the switch leading to yard track 5. There was no one riding on the rear end of the tender of the switch engine. Engineman Shanks further stated that had Fireman Brown been keeping a proper lookout the accident would not have occurred.

Fireman Brown, of engine 1825, stated that when his engine headed into yard track 5 he saw engine 1958 standing on the lead track beside yard track 1. While the coupling to the cars was being made he was getting a drink of water, and after starting to back out Engineman Shanks asked him where engine 1958 was located; he immediately crossed over to his side of the engine, saw engine 1958 about 15 feet distant and called a warning to Engineman Shanks. His engine was nearly stopped when the collision occurred. Fireman Brown further stated that his view of the lead track was unobstructed and had he been keeping a proper lookout he would have seen the light engine in time to have prevented the accident.

The first knowledge Switchmen Bean and Poole, of engine 1825, had of anything wrong was when the accident occurred.

Engineman Waggoner, of engine 1938, said he noticed engine 1825 into clear on yard track 5 just prior to the accident. As his engine approached yard track 4, Brakeman French ran ahead, lined the switch and gave a back-up signal, the engine almost coming to a stop, the accident occurred shortly afterwards, this being the first intimation he had of anything wrong.

Brakeman French, of engine 1958, stated that engine 1825, was into clear on yard track 5 when he lined the switch for yard track 4, and although the switch engine was moving in the direction of the lead track at this time he thought it would stop before fouling the lead track.

When he realized the switch engine was not going to stop he gave Engineman Waggoner a stop signal, but the accident occurred immediately afterwards.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by failure of Engineman Shanks and Fireman Brown of engine 1825 to ascertain that the lead track was clear for the movement about to be made.

Had Engineman Shanks definitely ascertained that the lead track was clear before starting the back-up movement this accident could not have occurred.

Had Fireman Brown of engine 1825 been keeping a proper lookout he could have seen the light engine in time to have prevented the accident.

The employees involved were experienced men. At the time of the accident the crew of the switch engine had been on duty less than 6 hours, and the crew of the light engine approximately 1 hour, prior to which they had been off duty 16 hours or more.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BOFLAND.

Director.