

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
 INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
 INTERNATIONAL-GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD NEAR JEWETT,  
 TEXAS, ON JANUARY 13, 1930

February 27, 1930

To the Commission:

On January 13, 1930, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a light engine on the International-Great Northern Railroad near Jewett, Texas, which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of nine employees, two mail clerks, one Pullman conductor and one news agent

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Taylor District of the Palestine Division, which extends between Taylor and Palestine, Texas, a distance of 144.8 miles, and 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 at a point approximately 5 miles north of Jewett, approaching this point from the south there is a 2° 1' curve to the right 1,466 feet in length, followed by a tangent 2,970 feet in length on which the accident occurred. Approaching from the north there is a 1° 1' curve to the right 910 feet in length, followed by tangent track, the accident occurring on this tangent 654 feet from the southern end of the curve. The grade is descending for a considerable distance for northbound trains, the maximum being 1 per cent at the point of accident. For southbound trains the grade is slightly descending followed by level track for a distance of about 200 feet, then ascending grade to the point of accident, a distance of approximately 400 feet. There is a public highway on the east side of the railroad and practically parallel with it.

The weather was clear and cold at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 8.16 p.m.

Description

Northbound passenger train No. 4 consisted of one express car, one baggage and express car, one baggage and mail car, one mail storage car, one coach, one chair car, two Pullman sleeping cars, one of which was dead-head, and one dining car in the order named, hauled by engine 1153 and was in charge of Conductor Jones and Engineman Mall. The cars were of all-steel construction, with the exception of the first car, which was of wooden construction with steel centersill, and the sixth car, which was of steel-underframe construction. Train No. 4 departed from Jewett, the last open telegraph office at 8.08 p.m., 3 minutes late, and was running at a speed variously estimated to have been from 35 to 45 miles per hour when it collided with extra 371.

Extra 371 south, consisting of engine 371, running

light, was in charge of Conductor Daniels and Engineman Haggerty. They held an order giving them right over train No. 66 from Palestine to Valley Junction, and several slow orders, but nothing relating to train No. 4. This train left Palestine, 43.8 miles north of Jewett at 7.00 p.m., and collided with passenger train No. 4 while running at a speed variously estimated to have been between 30 and 50 miles an hour.

The two locomotives telescoped each other and were almost completely demolished. As a result of the impact engine 371 was shoved backward a distance of about 90 feet. The tender of locomotive No. 4 over-rode the underframe of the head baggage car and telescoped it a distance of about 20 feet. The head truck of this car was derailed and the car totally demolished. With the exception of two trucks knocked off center, the remainder of this train was practically undamaged. The employees killed were the engineman and baggageman of train No. 4, the latter riding in the head baggage car.

#### Summary of evidence

Fireman O'Briant of passenger train No. 4 stated that his train was on time as it rounded the curve north of Jewett and while running at a speed of about 45 miles per hour he saw the reflection of a headlight, but thought at the time it was an automobile on the highway paralleling the track. He watched it, however, until he could see that it was a locomotive headlight and told Engineman Nall a train was approaching. He said Engineman Nall immediately applied the air brakes but he could not say whether or not it was a service or an emergency application. Fireman O'Briant further stated he got down on the step on his side of the engine and as the brakes did not seem to reduce the speed as he thought they should, he looked to see if the brakes were really on and noticed fire flying from the wheels. He said there were no steam leaks or anything to obscure his vision, and everything on the engine was functioning properly. His train held no orders restricting their rights against Extra 371, and he had no knowledge of that train being on the road.

Conductor Jones of train No. 4, stated he took charge of this train at San Antonio and that the air brakes were tested at that point and found to be working properly. At Austin where the dining-car was picked up another air-brake test was made, and so far as he was aware no trouble was experienced between that point and the point of accident, the engineman had not made any complaint about the condition of the engine. At the time of the accident he was riding in the fifth car from the locomotive. He felt two sudden shocks, followed almost immediately by the collision, as a result of which he was thrown forward onto the seat ahead. As soon as he regained his feet, he looked at his watch and it was then 8.18 p.m. Conductor Jones further stated that his watch had recently been inspected and was found to be four seconds slow, also that he compared his time with the standard clock at Taylor on the day of the accident and there was five seconds difference.

The statements of Brakenan Wardlow and Train Porter King practically corroborated the statements made by Conductor Jones.

Engineman Haggerty of extra 371 stated he held a message instructing him to handle this engine carefully, as it was new. He was running at a speed of 45 miles an hour or more when he saw a headlight around the curve, he closed the throttle, and as train No. 4 came onto straight track and he realized that it was a train he applied the air brakes, but the engine had not stopped before the collision occurred. Engineman Haggerty further stated no trouble was experienced with the air brakes at any time between Palestine and the point of accident, and there was no conversation between the conductor, fireman and himself regarding train No. 4. At the time of this investigation he had not fully recovered from his injuries. He first stated he thought he had 10 minutes on No. 4 at Jewett, but he later said he must have made an error in No. 4's time at Jewett, he thought it was due out of Jewett at 8.25 p.m. whereas its scheduled time of departure from that point was 8.05 p.m.

Fireman Hawthorne of extra 371 stated when his train reached Oakwood, which is approximately 25 miles north of the point of accident, he and the engineer got down and oiled around the engine, leaving this point he stated he saw Conductor Daniels look at his time-table and his watch. The first he knew of impending danger was when Conductor Daniels called a warning of danger, at which time Fireman Hawthorne stated he saw the headlight of train No. 4 about one-fourth mile away and he jumped from the engine. He could not say whether or not Engineman Haggerty closed the throttle and applied the air brakes. Fireman Hawthorne also stated his train held no orders with respect to train No. 4.

Conductor Daniels of extra 371 said his train proceeded southward from Palestine to Oakwood, where a stop was made. While at this point he looked at his watch and also his time-card for the time of train No. 4, but stated he must have misread the time that train was due at Jewett. He further stated he compared his watch with the standard clock and also with the engineman's watch before leaving Palestine and his watch was about five seconds slow. Leaving Oakwood he sat on the fireman's seat-box which is on the outside of the curve approaching the point of accident. His train was traveling at a speed of approximately 50 miles per hour when he saw a headlight about one-half mile away, which he thought at first was an automobile on the highway paralleling the track. However, when the fireman asked what it was he replied "It's No. 4", at the same time getting out his time-card, the accident occurring almost immediately. He said the air brakes worked properly when the stop was made at Oakwood, but he did not know how they operated just before the accident occurred.

Roadmaster Vanover of the Taylor District, stated he rode train No. 4 from Taylor to the point of collision on the day of the accident. He was in the dining car, the last car in the train, when he felt the air go on, the crash occurring immediately afterwards. He estimated the speed of the train at that time between 35 and 40 miles per hour. He considered the track in this vicinity in first-class condition, and said there were no speed restrictions over this portion of it.

Master Mechanic Graham, of the Palestine Division,

stated he arrived at the scene of the accident about 2 hours after its occurrence and made an examination of the locomotives and equipment, and in his opinion there was no defective condition which could have contributed to the cause of the accident.

Dispatcher Collier who has jurisdiction over the district on which the accident occurred, stated that his telephone wire failed at 8.16 p m., which disturbance he later learned was caused by the accident.

On the evening of January 18, the Commission's inspectors conducted a vision test to determine how far these two trains might have been seen across the curve. Using the same type locomotives under the same weather conditions, and assuming that the two trains were running approximately the same speeds, it was found that they could be seen from each other a distance of about 3,500 feet, timber on the west side of the track restricting further vision. The inspectors also noted that automobile headlights could easily be mistaken for locomotive headlights.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of extra 371 to clear the time of train No. 4, for which the entire crew is responsible.

The crew of extra 371 had no orders of any kind pertaining to train No. 4. The evidence indicates that both Conductor Daniels and Engineer Haggerty of Extra 371 either entirely overlooked train No. 4, an opposing superior train, or both made a mistake in checking its time. Both were experienced men, they were in charge of a light engine and there were no other duties to require their attention. They had been on duty on this trip for less than two hours. There can be no excuse for their failure properly to check the time of train No. 4 and to clear for that train as required by the rules. It appears that when headlight of train No. 4 was first seen around the curve approaching the point of accident both Conductor Daniels and Engineer Haggerty mistook it for the headlight of an automobile on the highway paralleling the track at this point, and when they finally realized it was a train it was then too late to stop before the collision occurred.

The total number of trains operated over this subdivision for the thirty days previous to the date of accident was 320, or an average of 10.6 trains daily. For the purpose of providing additional protection on this line, the management of this railroad should give serious consideration to the use of an adequate block-signal system.

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. I. BORLAND

Director.