

October 17th, 1911.

Interstate Commerce Commission,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sirs,

On September 13th, 1911, a serious accident occurred on the Lake Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad near Warner Road, about one mile from the Terminal of the Railroad at Marcelline Avenue S. E., Cleveland, Ohio. No telegraphic report of this accident was made by the railroad. Inspector Coutts, who was in Cleveland at the time, made an investigation of this accident and a synopsis of his report is herewith submitted.

This train was a Lake Shore & Michigan Southern work train, hauled by engine 5322, and consisted of a flat car, two steel hoppers, nine steel coke racks, and nine gondolas, all empty, and one caboose. The train left Wheeling Junction at 5:15 P. M., and was taking the laborers from their work back to the terminal in Cleveland. The derailment resulted in the death of four laborers and injuries to sixteen others, some of them serious.

At the time of the accident the train was backing up at a speed estimated to be about thirty-five miles per hour. The run from Wheeling Junction to the point of derailment, a distance of about twenty-two and one half miles, had been made

in one hour, including several short stops en route, aggregating about thirteen minutes. The tender of the engine, after the derailment, rode the rail for a distance of about thirty feet, then dropped off, ran along on the ties for about 250 feet, and turned over bottom side up, clearing the right of way. The locomotive was also derailed, tipping over and falling on another track. The flat car next to the locomotive, on which the killed and injured laborers were riding, was crushed between the locomotive and the steel hoppers and coal racks, six of which were derailed.

The accident occurred on a piece of track which is nearly straight, with a slight down grade, and is laid with 60-pound steel rails. The ties are of oak and are ballasted with crushed furnace slag. The track did not appear to be very solidly packed, but was in fairly good condition for new track. This piece of track is about 34 miles long, has been under construction for the past four or five years, and was completed in June of last year, although it had not yet been placed in service for general traffic. It belongs jointly to the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and Pennsylvania Railroads, being operated at the present time by the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad between Belt Line crossing, Cleveland, Ohio, and Brady's Lake, near Ravenna, Ohio. A short distance from the point of derailment there was a depression in the track

known to the foreman in charge of construction and considered by him to be a bad place, and trains moving over it used reduced speed. The engineer and fireman were making their second round trip over the road; the conductor had been at this work for four days, and the brakeman since February, 1911. Verbal instructions are given by the road master and foreman of construction to conductors and engineers relative to track conditions. No notices are posted at the terminal calling attention to bad places in the track, nor are any caution flags displayed to warn employees that slow speed is necessary. Testimony at the investigation showed that the conductor had been advised of the bad place in the track, but no one seems to have furnished the engineer with this information and he was permitted to use his own judgment as to the rate of speed.

The movement of work trains is directed from the office of the road master and telephones are installed at several sidings, no train orders being used. The engine was of the consolidated class, weighing 150,000 pounds, and the tender, loaded, weighed 121,000 pounds. A careful inspection of the wheels and trucks of the tender failed to disclose any defects that would contribute to the derailment.

This accident was caused by the engineman exercising poor judgment in backing up at an excessive rate of speed over new track.

The greatest number of casualties occasioned upon the

laborers was due to the fact that the empty flat car on which they were riding while being taken from their work to the terminal was crushed between the engine and the heavy steel cars behind it.

As a preventative of such accidents it is recommended that in all cases where track work under construction requires slow speed, slow-boards shall be installed to indicate to approaching trains the place where such slow speed is required.

It is further recommended that such equipment shall be furnished so will provide proper safety for laborers, so they will not be required to ride upon flat cars while being carried to and from their work.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of  
Safety Appliances.