INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD AT LONG ISLAND CITY, N Y , ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1926.

October 22, 1926.

To the Commission

On September 5, 1926, there was a collision between a switching transfer and a standing car on the Long Island Railroad at Long Island City, N Y., which resulted in the death of one employee.

Location and Method of Operation.

This accident occurred on the North Shore Freight Branch within the limits of that part of the Eighth Street Yard known as the Westbound Yard at Long Island City The general direction of the tracks is east and west and they are designated from north to south as follows: scale track, running track, and tracks 1 to 22 inclusive, numbered consecutively. The running track is used for the placing of cars to be classified and the numbered tracks are used for the classification and storage of cars. The east end of track 1 serves as a lead track. Track 6 merges with track 5 at a point 59.44 feet west of the switch connecting track 5 with track 1, the point of accident was at the fouling point of the switch connecting track 6 with track 5.

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 10.30 p.m.

Description.

Switch engine 264, in charge of Foreman Sekema and Engineman Gildersleeve, switching in the western end of the yard, went in on track 5 to pick up some cars on that track, but found a car on track 6 and not clear the fouling point, making it necessary to shove the cars on track 6 eastward about one-half a car-length, which movement caused the east car of this cut to foul the clearance point of the switch leading to track 5 in the eastern end of the yard.

Switch engine 134, in charge of Foreman Farrell and Engineman Wolf, switching in the east end of the

yard, picked up a cut of 18 cars on the running track and proceeded to place 12 of them on track 5. Upon approaching track 5 the 12 cars were kicked towards that track at a speed estimated to have been from 5 to 8 miles an hour, and when the cars entered track 5 they cornered the leading car on track 6, which was not into clear.

The force of the impact causedthe derailment of the leading car and of the forward truck of the second car in the moving cut, as well as the derailment of the first car in the standing cut, these cars were only slightly damaged. The employee killed was a brakeman who was thrown from the top of the leading car of the cut being handled by engine 134.

Summary of Evidence

Foreman Farrell, of engine 134, stated that about 10 p.m. his crew picked up 2 cars on track 12 and placed them on track 5 and at that time, 1 of these 2 cars being unusually wide, he particularly noted the clearance of the cars of track 6 and found it to be all right. He then went with the engine to the running track and after doing some switching from that track they returned about 20 or 25 minutes later with 18 cars, 12 of which were to be placed on track 5. He said that at the time the 2 cars were put on track 5 there were other cars on that track, but when they started to put the 12 cars on track 5 it was clear. Foreman Farrell stated that Brakeman Knack, who was killed, was riding on the leading car of the cut intended for track 5 and that just before the collision occurred he saw the brakeman give a stop signal; but at that time the cars had already been cut off from the engine. He immediately went to the point of accident and noticed that the head car on track 6 did not clear, but did not examine the equipment to learn just how far the car on track 6 was standing beyond the clearance point when the accident occurred. Foreman Farrell further stated that he did not know what caused the cars on track 6 to foul track 5 between the time he placed the 2 cars on track 5 and the time he returned with the cut of 12 cars, but presumed that the engine working in the western end of the yard had moved them.

Switchman West, of engine 134, stated that he lined the switches for track 5 at the time the 2 cars taken from track 12 were placed on that track and at that time he observed that the cars on track 6 cleared those placed on track 5. At the time the crew left

for the running track he was instructed by his conductor to line the switches for tracks 12, 5 and 7 He said that as the switch was still lined for track 5 he proceeded to the other two switches, remaining at the switch for track 7 until the crew returned with the cut of cars for track 5 and was still standing at that point when the collision occurred. He did not look at the clearance after the 2 cars were placed on track 5.

Foreman Sekema, of engine 264, stated that his crew went to the west end of track 5 to remove the cars from that track, but found a car, which his crew had previously placed on track 6, which did not clear the fouling point; his crew then proceeded to shove the cars on track 6 back into clear. When this move was made Foreman Sekema said he protected the movement by stationing himself on the fifth car from the east end of the cut on track 5, from which point he gave the signal to shove back the cars on track 6, the cars being moved back one-fourth to one-half a car-length, this being done at about 10.10 or 10 15 p. m. He said that he knew the rules and regulations were to the effect that a man should be stationed at the head end of a cut of cars when being moved ahead of the engine, and admitted he did not know whether or not this movement caused the leading car to foul track 5 at its eastern end. His statements were practically corroborated by those of Brakeman Conradi, also of engine 264.

The other members of the crews involved in this accident knew very little of existing conditions until after the accident occurred and, therefore, could add nothing of importance to the investigation.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Foreman Sekema, of engine 264, properly to protect the east end of track 6 when the cars on that track were shoved eastward for the purpose of clearing the fouling point at the western end of track 6.

While no rules published by this railroad governing a movement of this kind could be found, it was evident from the testimony that the employees involved in the accident had been instructed and knew that they were not allowed to push cars so as to foul cars or tracks at the opposite end. Notwithstanding this fact, after the cars were pushed back on track 6 by engine 264 no member of that crew made any attempt to ascertain whether or not the leading car had been shoved beyond the clearance point.

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. P. BORLAND

Director.