

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD AT GALLATIN, TENN.,
ON JANUARY 15, 1924.

March 29, 1924.

To the Commission:

On January 15, 1924, there was a collision between the front and rear portions of a freight train on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Gallatin, Tenn., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of three employees.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on that part of the Nashville Division extending between Nashville, Tenn., and Bowling Green, Ky., a distance of 73.03 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred on the main track approximately 400 feet south of the station at Gallatin, approaching this point from the north the track is tangent for 3,573 feet, followed by a curve of $1^{\circ} 30'$ to the right, 4,608 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve 904 feet from its northern end. The grade from the north is about 0.4 per cent descending at the point of accident. previous to that it is 0.98 per cent. A special time-table rule reads as follows:

"When stops are made on grades either on main tracks or sidings, hand brakes must be used to assist in preventing train from moving."

It was raining at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10.12 p.m.

Description.

Southbound second-class freight train No. 73 consisted of 28 cars and a caboose, hauled by engines 199 and 1246, and was in charge of Conductor Blotcher and Enginemen Baulch and Crouch. This train upon arrival at Gallatin was brought to a stop by means of the automatic air brakes, with the engines about 940 feet north of the north water crane, and the engines were then cut off, the rear portion of the train being left standing on the grade without any hand brakes having been set. Shortly afterwards, while the engines were being moved backward to spot the lead engine at the water crane, the rear portion of

the train ran down the grade and collided with the engines while running at a speed of about 3 or 10 miles an hour.

The impact drove the tender cistern of engine 1246 ahead, jamming it against the boiler head of the engine. The 1st, 17th and 19th cars of the train were derailed and the 18th car was badly damaged. The employee killed was a fireman.

Summary of evidence.

Conductor Carrett of helper engine 199, said he received an order to doublehead train No. 2 from Nashville to Portland and at that point received another order to assist train No. 73 to Maplewood. The engine was turned on the wye, and upon the arrival of train No. 73, engine 199 was coupled to it. A car was to be picked up at Gallatin and Conductor Carrett suggested to Brakeman Smith who was riding on the lead engine with him, that if the latter would uncouple the engines and assist in taking water he would line the switches to pick up the car. Conductor Carrett said that on arrival at Gallatin he got off the engine, leaving Brakeman Smith to cut off the engines, and did not know whether the brakeman set any hand brakes. It was after he had thrown one switch and was on his way to the scaldtrack switch that he heard the sound of cars rolling, and when he saw they were the cars of his own train he ran towards the engines at the water crane giving broke-in-two signals and then gave proceed signals, shouting meanwhile. The cars when he first saw them were moving at a speed of about 3 miles an hour and he said he made no attempt to get on them to set hand brakes for the reason that he wanted to open an angle cock on the head car and to get the engines out of the way, and he estimated that the cars had attained a speed of about 8 or 10 miles an hour when they collided with the engines. He also said that it was not the practice to set hand brakes on cars standing on the grade at Gallatin when the stop would not require more than four or five minutes, after which time it would be necessary to set hand brakes, and estimated that the work to be performed in this case would have required about 10 minutes.

Engineman Paulch of engine 199, said that when his engine was coupled to the train at Portland he made an air-brake test, at which time the brakes worked satisfactorily, and he experienced no difficulty in controlling the train en route to Gallatin. Engineman Paulch said he made a brake-pipe reduction of from 18 to 25 pounds for the stop and did not release the brakes until the engines were uncoupled from the train and a proceed signal was received. When the brakes were released the air pressure

went up which indicated to him that he had not released the brakes on the train. The engines were then run ahead to the north water crane and believing the second engine required water he ran by the crane and stopped, and he had just whistled a back-up signal and started to move backward when the collision occurred. He said that about three or four minutes had elapsed after the first stop was made until the collision occurred, and he had no knowledge of the condition of the air brakes on the cars nor whether any hand brakes were set. Fireman Pinkleton corroborated the statements of Engineman Saulon.

Brakeman Smith, of train No. 73, said that proper airbrake tests were made at Franklin, where one car was picked up, and at Portland, where helper engine 199 was coupled to the train. Leaving Portland he said he rode on the lead engine and, acting in accordance with a plan suggested by Conductor Garrett, when the train stopped at Gallatin he got off and after turning the angle cock on the head car, uncoupled the air hose and then opened the angle cock to make sure the brakes had not been released, when the air came through, he closed the angle cock and gave the engineman a proceed signal. Brakeman Smith said he did not set any hand brakes for the reason that it had not been the practice at this point when the work to be done would require but a short time, and he expected that the air brakes would hold the train. He rode with the engines to the water crane and estimated that two or three minutes had elapsed from the time the engines were cut off until the accident occurred.

Engineman Crouch said the brakes on all of the cars leaving Louisville were working except one. When the helper engine was coupled on ahead of his engine at Portland the engineman on that engine made an air-brake test and thereafter took control of the train. He said he did not know the condition of the air in the train line when the stop was made at Gallatin, but noted that the gauge showed between 15 and 20 pounds brake-pipe pressure, and said he had no intimation of the cars rolling down on them until the collision occurred.

Conductor Blotner said he was riding in the caboose when the stop at Gallatin was made and although he did not look at the gauge he knew the brakes were working all right. About a minute after the stop the brakes were released and the train began to move ahead slowly; he did not know that the engines had been uncoupled from the train but supposed that the engineman had stopped short of the water crane and braced himself for the stop at the water crane, and when the shock came he did not think it was any more than the usual emergency stop. He did not learn of the collision until he went ahead. He also said it was not the practice to set hand brakes at Gallatin when only a short stop was to be made. Flagman Laird's statements

corroborated those of the conductor.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by leaving the rear portion of the train on a descending grade without the hand brakes being set as required by rule, for which Conductor Garrett, of engine 199, and brakeman Smith, of train No. 73, are responsible.

Although both men were familiar with the grade in this vicinity neither took any action to secure the rear portion of the train while the pick-up movement was being made. Instead of setting hand brakes on the train before cutting off the engines, Brakeman Smith trusted to the air brakes and to Conductor Garrett to take care of the detached cars. Conductor Garrett admitted that the air brakes would not hold over 4 or 5 minutes and he also knew that the work to be done might require 10 minutes, yet he took no action toward setting hand brakes. Had either of these employees set the hand brakes, as required by the time-table rule previously quoted, the accident would have been averted.

All of the employees involved were experienced men. The crew of engine 199 had been on duty 2 hours and 27 minutes and the crew of train No. 73 had been on duty 10 hours and 57 minutes, after ordinary duty periods ranging from 9 to 55 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BOFLAND

Director.