

IN RE THE DEATH OF AN ACCIDENTAL DECEASED ON THE
 LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD NEAR WORTONVILLE, KY.,
 AUGUST 30, 1918.

November 12, 1918.

On August 30, 1918, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Henderson Division of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad near Wortonville, Ky., which resulted in the death of one employee and injury of four employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Henderson Division extends between Evansville, Ind. and Asqui, Tenn., a distance of 148.41 miles. Between Evansville and FS tower, a distance of 8.15 miles, it is a double track line; the remaining mileage of the division is single track. The line is equipped with automatic block signals between Eighth Avenue, Evansville, and Burlington, a distance of 53.45 miles, and between Guthrie and Asqui, a distance of 38.99 miles. On that part of the line between Burlington and Guthrie, a distance of 55.41 miles there are no block signals, train movements being governed by time table, and dispatcher's orders transmitted by telephone. On single track southbound trains are superior to trains of the same class moving in the opposite direction.

The trains involved were second class northbound train No. 24 and second class southbound train No. 33. Train No. 24, consisting of engine No. 1138, seven cars and a caboose, in charge of Conductor Lynn and Conductor Giannini,

left Hopkinsville, its southern terminal, 31.67 miles south of
Marlington, at 8.00 a.m., two hours and sixteen minutes late.
At Letham, the first station north of Hopkinsville, train No.
24 was given order No. 53 reading as follows:

No. 24 engine 1138 has right over End No. 31 and
No. 33 engines 2 and 3 Letham to Marlington. No. 59
engine 1354 wait at Atkinson until eleven thirty
11.30 a.m.

This order was made obsolete at 8.11 a.m.

At Lomney, ten miles south of Marlington, and the
last open train order office south of the point of collision,
train No. 24 took siding to meet train No. 59, and departed
from Lomney at 1.24 p.m., six hours and nineteen minutes late,
colliding with 1st No. 33 about two miles north of Lomney at
about 1.30 p.m. while running at an estimated speed of thirty
miles per hour.

At 11.58 a.m. extra 1352, with 53 loaded cars and a
caboose, in charge of Conductor Longstaff and Fireman Martin
left Atkinson southbound with order No. 54 reading as follows:

Engine 1352 run extra Atkinson to Merton and has right
over No. 59 engine 4 Atkinson to Merton. Engine 1352 dis-
play signals and run as 1st No. 33 Merton to Nashville.

This train left Merton as 1st No. 33 at 12.43 p.m., three hours
and thirteen minutes late, and arrived at Mertonville, the last
open train order office north of the point of collision, at 1.00
p.m. At this point 1st No. 33 met train No. 24 and permitted
train No. 59 to pass, following the latter train away from
Mertonville at 1.17 p.m., but moving slowly because of a heavy
train and an ascending grade. When a little more than a mile

south of Nortonville train let no. 33 collided with train no. 24 while running at a speed estimated between 6 and 12 miles per hour. The weather at the time of the accident was clear.

The engineer of train no. 24 was killed. Locomotive 1138 of this train remained upright but was derailed except its rear driving wheels, the front engine truck resting between the first and second pair of drivers. The front end of the locomotive was crushed in and its cylinders broken. The tender was telescoped into the engine cab, but its trucks were not derailed. The entire locomotive and tender remained on the roadbed. The car next the engine was damaged, the second and third cars in the train were badly broken and were subsequently destroyed. The fourth car in the train was also damaged.

Locomotive 1362 of 1st No. 33 had its front end crushed and locked with the front end of opposing locomotive. It was derailed with the exception of the rear pair of driving wheels, but remained upright on the roadbed. The second and seventeenth cars from the engine were badly damaged and subsequently destroyed and one other car was damaged.

Between Nortonville and Conroy, 3 miles, the grade ascends southward from .34% to .50%. Leaving Nortonville and approaching the point of accident from the north there is a tangent 283 feet in length to a 4 degree curve to the right which extends 408 feet to another tangent 2619 feet long followed by a 4-degree curve to the left which is 1430 feet long. The

collision occurred at the south end of this curve where it reverses into a 4-degree curve to the right 1100 feet long. Moving northward from Romney and leaving a 3-degree curve there is a tangent about 1250 feet long followed by a 4-degree curve to the left approximately 1100 feet in length leading to the scene of the accident. The collision occurred in a rock cut 3000 feet in length with banks about 30 feet high. The view of an approaching train at this point was limited to a few car lengths.

Conductor Lynn of train No. 24 stated that at Latham he received order No. 53. He stopped at several stations after leaving Latham and received other orders in connection with the running of his train, but no further orders concerning No. 33; his train was running about thirty miles an hour when the collision occurred.

Conductor Conestaff stated that he was called to leave Marlinton at 10.45 a.m. with engine and caboose and ran as extra 1352 to Atkinson. At Atkinson, after picking up a full train of cars for the south, he received order No. 54. He received other orders in connection with the running of his train, but nothing concerning train No. 24, and knew nothing about that train until the collision occurred. Just after the accident he talked with several members of the train crews, among them Conductor Lynn of No. 24 to whom he said that let No. 33 had no orders whatever concerning No. 24. Conductor Lynn then read his orders which said that No. 24 had right of track over let No. 33 to Marlinton.

Engineman Martin of train let No. 33 stated that

he left Burlington at 10.45 a.m.; that he had orders to run as extra to Atkinson, right of track over No. 82 Atkinson to Horton and orders to display signals and run as lat No. 23 Horton to Asheville. At Horton he received a meeting order with No. 34 and notice that lat No. 30 had right of track over his train Guthrie to Atham. Also at Horton he got verbal instructions to let No. 59 by at Hortonville, but he knew nothing whatever about No. 24 and had no orders concerning that train. He said that it did not occur to him to inquire about No. 24, that it was not customary for a superior train to ask about an inferior train and that he was not required to check the register at Horton for No. 24. He said that he was running about twelve or fifteen miles an hour when he first saw No. 24 about three or four car lengths away. He called to the fireman to get off and attempted to get off himself, but slipped in the deck of the engine and before he could get up the trains crashed.

Fireman Bicmiller of lat No. 36 stated that his train had no orders to meet No. 24, and corroborated the statements of Engineer Martinson, but estimated the speed of his train at 10 miles an hour.

Operator Brown, who was on duty at Romney, stated that he reported to the dispatcher that No. 24 was approaching his station, to which dispatcher replied "O. K.," saying nothing about lat No. 23.

Operator Gray, who was on duty at Hortonville, stated that he reported lat No. 3 coming to the dispatcher and inquired what lat No. 24 was doing on siding. He was told it was for the

purpose of letting No. 59 pass. Nothing was said about No. 24.

Train Dispatcher Steuve, who was on duty at the time of the accident, stated that he had been in the service of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad since December, 1907, having been employed as operator at various stations until August, 1917, when he was transferred to a position as operator in the dispatcher's office, which position he regularly held at the time of the accident. In November, 1917, he was promoted to extra dispatcher, since which time he had endeavored to familiarize himself with the duties of dispatcher by sitting in on the dispatcher's extra duty after his working hours. He could not remember to what extent his had been done, but he had been unable to sit in with the dispatcher on the south end district on account of no out of a room for this purpose being provided on the dispatcher's table. He had worked only four or five days as extra dispatcher on the north end district, but not at all on the south end. On the date of the accident he was instructed by the Chief Dispatcher to work as first trier district on the south end district, and went on duty at such a time.

Dispatcher Steuve stated that he issued an order giving train No. 24 right over No. 33 between Carleton, Kentucky and the order to No. 59 at Burlington. He admitted creating lat No. 24, engine 1358, at Horton, an intermediate point, overlooking the fact that this train would not receive the order. His name was addressed to it and placed at Carling-

ton. He failed to transmit this order to train let No. 33 when he created it, and entirely overlooked this failure. He admitted a similar error with respect to train let No. 33 and train No. 34 in that train No. 34 was given right of track over No. 33 to Norton, the order being placed at Marlinton for No. 37; and for a period of 22 minutes between 11.50 a.m. and 12.12 p.m. that movement was unprotected, since at 11.50 he created let No. 33 at an intermediate point south of Marlinton, where the order had been originally placed for No. 33, and at 12.12 he gave let No. 33 and No. 34 orders to meet at Nortonville. He said the work was new to him, and that he was very busy and entirely forgot the orders in question. He said that he was skeptical about his ability to do the work on the south end district, but made no objection to the assignment for fear the chief dispatcher would think he did not want to work. He said he had no fear about being able to do the work safely, but was afraid he could not do it without causing delay to trains. He admitted that there were no duties to perform other than those usually performed by a train dispatcher, and said that he would have had no hesitancy in calling upon the chief dispatcher for assistance if it became necessary.

Chief Dispatcher McFinson stated that he had been acquainted with Mr. Steve for 15 years, and had selected him for extra dispatcher, and had instructed and coached him concerning the duties of a dispatcher on numerous occasions. He said he had worked him extra on the north end district a few times, and from that experience and general observation, based

upon long acquaintance, he felt that Steuve was safe and would develop into a man capable of doing the work. He said that the first trick, to which Steuve was assigned on this date, was considered the easiest trick on that district. The regular first trick dispatcher was off duty on that date, necessitating the use of dispatcher Steuve.

This accident was caused by the failure of train let No. 33, a second class southbound train, superior by direction, to receive a train order which had been issued giving train No. 24, a second class northbound train, inferior by direction, right of track over train No. 33 Latham to Burlington. Train No. 33 failed to receive this order, because this section was created at an intermediate point south of the terminal where the order was placed, the movement between these points being made as an extra.

Responsibility for the accident rests with Train Dispatcher Steuve, since he failed to give let No. 33 the order, or make other provision to protect the rights conferred by it, when he created let No. 33 at an outlying point beyond where the order was placed and where the schedule of train No. 33 originated.

There appears to have been no good basis for the belief of Chief Dispatcher Skinnon that dispatcher Steuve was competent. Opportunity was afforded in a very limited degree for Steuve to acquaint himself with the duties of a dispatcher. The fact that Steuve had worked but a few days on another district in the same office some time previously should not have

been taken as sufficient evidence of his fitness to perform the duties which were assigned to him.

The incompetency of Dispatcher Steuve is indicated by the fact that he permitted two lap orders to exist during the short period of his service on the date of the accident. In two separate and distinct orders he gave trains No. 24 and 34 right over No. 33, the former to Larlington, the terminal where No. 33's schedule originated, and the latter to Horton, placing each order at Larlington. Subsequently he created lat No. 33 at Horton, an intermediate station three and one-half miles south of Larlington, and failed to release the right of track orders to lat No. 33 or take other means to protect the rights of trains 24 and 34 as conferred by these orders. He subsequently gave No. 34 orders to meet lat 33 at Hortonville, but there was a lapse of 22 minutes between the creation of lat No. 33 and the issuance of this order, during which time, had the means of communication failed, there would have been no way of preventing a collision between these trains. As regards the right of train No. 24 against No. 33 Dispatcher Steuve's lapse of memory was complete, as indicated by his own statement, together with the fact that he had two opportunities and at least an hour and twenty minutes time to correct his error; further, his attention was called to the approach of No. 24 at Romney and No. 33 at Hortonville, by the presence of these stations.

The Henderson Division is equipped with automatic block signals with the exception of the 55 miles between Larlington and Ontario; over this portion of the division no

block system is in operation. However, between these points the installation of an automatic block system has been authorized for some time past, and has been partially constructed, but the construction forces were withdrawn several months ago and employed on other work. At present the block signal installation is entirely suspended. For the operation of a manual block system over this section of track the facilities are all present. Between Burlington and Guthrie there are 14 stations, the maximum distance between stations being 6.65 miles. Five of these stations are train order offices, 6 being continuously operated; the 9 remaining stations are equipped with emergency telephones in dispatcher's circuit. It is therefore apparent that even with no increase in force a fairly efficient manual block system could be employed, and with but slight increase in force a complete system could be provided which would afford greatly increased safety for the operation of trains.

Dispatcher Stoupe had been on duty six hours and fifteen minutes at the time of the accident; the crew of train No. 24 had been on duty six hours, and the crew of first No. 23 had been on duty three hours and fifteen minutes. All these employees had been off duty more than ten hours prior to the above named periods of duty.