

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE MISSOURI PACIFIC RAILROAD NEAR KANSAS CITY, MO., ON JULY 12, 1922.

July 27, 1922.

To the Commission:

On July 12, 1922, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Missouri Pacific Railroad west of Hy-tex Siding, near Kansas City, Mo., which resulted in the death of 3 passengers and 1 employee, and the injury of 91 passengers, 10 employees, and 2 mail clerks.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on that part of the Central Kansas Division extending between Leeds, Mo., and Ossawatimie, Kans., a distance of 49.91 miles, and in the vicinity of the point of accident is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders and a manual block-signal system. Hy-tex is a siding only, and the point of accident was about 4,600 feet west of the west switch. Approaching from the east there are several curves and tangents, followed by 1,032 feet of tangent and a compound curve to the left 2,495 feet in length, the accident occurring on this curve about 600 feet from its eastern end, where the curvature is $3^{\circ} 34'$, approaching from the west there is a short tangent, following which the track curves to the right on the compound curve previously mentioned for a distance of about 1,900 feet. Approaching from the east the grade is ascending, level for about 300 feet, and then 0.54 per cent descending to the point of accident, a distance of about 550 feet, approaching from the west it is descending and then ascending for a distance of several hundred feet. The view is materially obstructed by trees on both sides of the track, and the presence of a parallel track of another railway makes it difficult for engine crews to tell on which track an opposing train is moving. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 6.40 p.m.

Description.

Eastbound freight train No. 92 consisted of about 15 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 528, and was in charge of Conductor Birchard and Engineman Rader. At Dodson, 4.24 miles west of Hy-tex and the last open office, the crew received a copy of train order No. 37, form 19, providing for a meet with train No. 11 at Hy-tex. Train No. 92 left Dodson, according to the train sheet, at 6.31 p.m., and collided with train No.

-2-

11 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 35 miles an hour.

Westbound passenger train No. 11 consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car, 1 coach, 1 chair car, 1 dining car, and 3 sleeping cars, all of steel construction, hauled by engine 6404 and was in charge of Conductor Bonnette and Engineman Moses. It left Kansas City, over the tracks of the Kansas City Terminal Railway, at 6.05 p.m., 20 minutes late, and passed Leeds, at which point it entered on the tracks of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, at 6.35 p.m., 25 minutes late. As the train was passing Leeds, the operator handed on several train orders, among which was train order No. 37, form 19, previously mentioned. The operator also delivered a clearance card properly filled out, and a block-signal caution card, also properly filled out, calling attention to the meet with train No. 92 at Hy-tex, 2.5 miles from Leeds. Train No. 11 passed Hy-tex without stopping and collided with train No. 92 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been from 15 to 25 miles an hour.

Both engines were derailed and badly damaged. The second car of train No. 11 was telescoped by the first car for a distance of about 25 feet, while 3 cars of train No. 92 were damaged. The employee killed was the engineman of train No. 92.

Summary of evidence

Operator Roberts, on duty at Leeds, handed on three sets of orders to the crew of train No. 11, one to the fireman, one to the porter, and one to the flagman. Fireman Steck said he immediately handed his set of orders to the engineman, who read them and handed them back to him, and that he himself then read them. Approaching the point of accident he had been working on the fire, and on looking out on the inside of the curve saw the approaching train, called to the engineman and jumped. He had not felt the air brakes being applied from the rear of the train. Porter Bryant had given the orders he received to Conductor Bonnette, who read them aloud to him and told him to watch out for the meeting points. The porter was sitting down in the second car and the conductor was near the rear of the third car when the latter saw that the train was within a train-length of the west switch at Hy-tex and still traveling at a high rate of speed. He said he looked for the emergency cord, but did not see it right away, and then ran to the front of the car, opened the vestibule and looked out, he then ran into the car ahead and asked the porter and also Conductor Furness, who was riding as a passenger, if they had seen train No. 92 and when they replied in the negative he said to apply the air brakes and at the same time jumped upon a seat and opened the emergency valve. Conductor Furness practically verified that part of Conductor Bonnette's statements which

-3-

related to his actions after entering the second car. He also said he thought that at the time Conductor Bonnette spoke to him the train was within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of where the accident occurred. Porter Bryant apparently had not been paying much attention to the operation of the train, and was still sitting down in the second car when the conductor came in. Flagman Jones said that when the train did not stop at Hy-tex he took out his orders and read them again to see if he had been mistaken, following which he also opened the emergency valve in the car in which he was riding.

The estimates as to the speed of the train before the application of the air brakes and at the time of the accident varied considerably. Conductor Bonnette thought the speed was reduced from 40 to 50 miles an hour to 15 miles an hour, Conductor Furness thought it had been reduced from 45 to 35 miles an hour, while Flagman Jones thought the train had been brought nearly to a stop from a speed of 25 or 30 miles an hour. None of the members of the train crew heard the engineman sound the meeting-point whistle signal, Conductor Bonnette saying this might have been due to the noise of a train passing on the track of the adjoining railway when his own train was in the vicinity of the east switch. On account of serious injuries sustained by Engineman Moses no statement from him could be obtained.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of the crew of train No. 11 to obey train order No. 37 and meet train No. 92 at Hy-tex.

Conductor Bonnette and Engineman Moses, being in charge of the train, are primarily responsible, but all the other members of the crew were aware of the contents of the order and there is no excuse for their failure to operate their train properly.

All the members of the crew of train No. 11 were men with long experience, at the time of the accident they had been on duty less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, after 22 hours off duty.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. Borland,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.