

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY
IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
MORGAN'S LOUISIANA & TEXAS RAILWAY & STEAMSHIP CO.,
SOUTHERN PACIFIC LINES, NEAR NEW IBERIA, LA., ON OCTOBER
2, 1923.

November 7, 1924.

To the Commission:

A supplemental investigation has been made of the derailment of a passenger train on the line of Morgan's Louisiana & Texas Railway & Steamship Co., Southern Pacific Lines, near New Iberia, La., on October 2, 1923, which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 1 employee

Summary of report of November 24, 1923.

The accident occurred on that part of the road extending between Algiers and Lafayette, La., a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The tracks cross those of another railroad at a point 1.37 miles east of New Iberia, movements over this crossing being controlled by an interlocking plant. Westbound passenger train No. 1 was being operated against the current of traffic, but the towerman having no knowledge of this fact set the route and signals for the eastbound track when he saw the headlight about 3.5 miles distant. There is a crossover between the two main tracks near the tower and the Hayes derail on the eastbound track was also set against opposing movements on that track or through the crossover, while the dwarf signal controlling such movements was in the stop position. The engineman, however, did not see the stop indication of the dwarf signal until within a very short distance of it, at which time he applied the air brakes in emergency but without being able to prevent his train from running off the derail, resulting in the death of the fireman.

Investigation developed that there was no telephone or telegraph communication provided at the interlocking tower, while on account of a curve in the track west of the tower the towerman did not know the westbound track was blocked, making it necessary to operate westbound trains against the current of traffic.

Facts developed by supplemental investigation

Since the occurrence of the accident telephone communication with the train dispatcher has been provided for this tower, the installation being completed on March 1, 1924, and in addition all other main line interlocking towers have been similarly equipped. At New Iberia, in addition to the telephone installation, the arrangement of the interlocking plant has been changed by the installation of a split derail in place of the Hayes derail, with a guard rail intended to lessen the danger of an engine turning over in case it should run into the open derail. The derail and the dwarf signal have been moved back an additional 100 feet from the crossing, while the eastbound caution signal has been moved back an additional distance of about 750 feet, and the other signals changed from straight mechanical to semi-automatic signals.

Conclusions

The tower at New Iberia is now provided with telephone communication, making it possible for the towerman to be kept informed when trains are to be moved against the current of traffic. In addition, it is noted that other main line interlocking plants have been similarly equipped, while additional changes in the arrangement of the New Iberia interlocking plant have been made with a view to providing increased safety.

Respectfully submitted,

W P. Borland,

Director.