

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE JOINT TRACKS OF THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD AND THE CHICAGO, ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC RAILWAY AT CHICAGO, ILL., ON MARCH 2, 1929.

June 14, 1929.

To the Commission:

On March 2, 1929, there was a rear-end collision between a New York Central passenger train and a Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific equipment train at Chicago, Ill.; there were no casualties of a serious nature reported as a result of this accident.

Location and method of operation

The accident occurred on that part of the Chicago Terminal Division which extends between Chicago and Englewood, a distance of 6.7 miles, and is a four-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and an automatic block-signal system, although in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident train movements are governed by track supervisors by means of electrically controlled signals which work in conjunction with the various switches. There are 11 stub-end tracks beginning at La Salle Street Station which converge into the four main tracks, which in turn are numbered from north to south, 3, 3, 4, and 5. The accident occurred within yard limits on track 4 at a point 2,625 feet east of La Salle Street station, referring to New York Central time-table direction; approaching this point from the west, beginning at the terminus, the track is tangent for a distance of 2,294 feet, followed by a $3^{\circ} 30'$ curve to the left 209 feet in length and then tangent track to the point of accident, a distance of 122 feet, and for some distance beyond that point. The grade at the point of accident is 0.6 per cent descending for eastbound trains.

The signals involved are of the two-position lower-quadrant type; night indications are yellow and red, for proceed at slow speed ready to stop, and stop, respectively. These signals are operated from Polk Street interlocking tower located approximately 1,400 feet east of La Salle Street station.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident which occurred at about 8.28 a.m.

Description.

The equipment of C. R. I. & P. passenger train No. 12 consisted of engine 4019, one baggage car, four coaches, one Pullman tourist car, one dining car and five Pullman sleeping cars, and at the time of the accident was in charge of Pilot Keefe and Engineman Fox. This train backed out of La Salle Street station, passed Polk Street tower at 8.22 a.m., and shortly afterwards it was brought to a stop on track 4 where it was still standing when it was struck by train No. 150.

Eastbound N.Y.C. passenger train No. 150 consisted of three coaches, one dining car, two parlor cars and two sleeping cars, hauled by engine 3288, and was in charge of Conductor Allen and Engineman Banta. This train departed from LaSalle Street station at 8.25 a.m., on time, passed Polk Street tower at 8.27 a.m., and collided with the engine of the equipment train while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 8 and 12 miles per hour.

Both engines were slightly damaged, while there was no damage to the cars or to the track.

Summary of evidence.

Under favorable conditions a view of the point of accident can be had from an eastbound engine upon its departure from La Salle Street station, but in this territory there is an intermittent flow of traffic, attended by smoke and steam, which restricts the visibility, and such a condition existed at the time of the accident. In addition to the equipment train which had just moved out of the station tracks ahead of train No. 150, another outbound train was passing on track 5 at the time the equipment train was brought to a stop, while inbound trains were passing on tracks 2 and 3.

Engineman Fox, of the equipment train, stated that his train was stopped by the pilot, who controlled the speed from the leading car of the train, the stop being made about five or six car-lengths west of 12th Street signal bridge, and that the train had been standing at that point not more than two minutes before the accident occurred. After coming to a stop his fireman got off the left side of the engine with a flag, but he did not see the fireman again until after the accident.

Fireman Centers, of the equipment train, who was a promoted man, stated that when his train came to a stop he procured his flag but did not get off immediately on account of trains passing on the adjoining tracks. As soon as the train on track 5 had passed, which required possibly five or ten seconds, he got off on that side of his engine with the

intention of proceeding to a point in the vicinity of the pilot to afford protection but had only reached a point opposite the cylinders when he noticed the approaching train emerge from steam and smoke about two car-lengths distant. He immediately gave stop signals but did not think they were at first observed, as he was of the opinion that the following train could have been brought to a stop, since its speed was only 8 or 10 miles per hour at the time. Fireman Centers knew the scheduled departing time of train No. 150, and had received a signal to hurry from the towerman at Polk Street tower, but hesitated about getting off due to the danger connected with the passing trains.

Pilot Keefe, of the equipment train, thought his train had been stopped about four minutes before the accident occurred.

Engineman Banta, of train No. 150, stated that before leaving La Salle Street station he examined all of the brake appliances on his engine and that when he tested the brakes after coupling to the train he received a signal from the car inspectors that the train brakes functioned properly. At the time this test was made the gauge registered 140 pounds main reservoir and 110 pounds brake-pipe pressure. He did not make a running test after departing as sufficient speed for this purpose had not been attained. All of the signals in the interlocking plant were displaying slow-speed indications, including signal 30, which was the last signal passed before reaching the point of accident. When his train reached a point about four coach-lengths from this signal he made a 6 to 8-pound brake-pipe reduction as he expected to find the automatic signal at 12th Street in the stop position. Shortly afterwards the fireman called a warning and he immediately moved the brake-valve handle to the emergency position without having released the brakes; he did not see a flagman at any time. His estimate of the speed of his train at the time the service application was made was 10 or 12 miles per hour and he thought it had been reduced very little before the emergency application was made as the train traveled a distance of only four or five coach-lengths between the two applications.

Fireman Poyser, of train No. 150, stated that he was riding on his seat-box looking ahead but on account of the smoke and steam he did not see the engine of the equipment train until it was only one car-length distant and he said he warned the engineman immediately. He estimated the speed of his train at the time engine 4019 came into view as having been between 8 and 10 miles per hour.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Fireman Centers of the equipment train to provide flag protection, and by the failure of Engineman Banta of train No. 150 to control the speed of his train under the existing conditions.

The special instructions contained in the joint timetable, which governs the territory in which the accident occurred, provide that when a train or engine is stopped, or speed reduced at any point, it must be protected as prescribed by the rules; these special instructions also provide that block signals in no way relieve trainmen or enginemen of the responsibility of protecting their train or engine, but there are no rules specifying how protection shall be afforded. Rule 93 of the C.R.I. & P. Railway requires in part that whoever obstructs the main track within yard limits must protect by a flagman when the obstruction cannot, for any reason, be plainly seen from approaching trains for a distance of at least 750 feet; in case of a collision the responsibility rests with the moving train or engine. The N.Y.C. rule 93 requires protection against first-class trains within yard limits and does not place responsibility on the approaching train.

Under the Rock Island rule, Fireman Centers should have left his engine as soon as it stopped; apparently he had at least two minutes in time at his disposal and under the conditions existing in this locality this would have given him time enough to protect his train.

Under the N.Y.C. rule 93, Engineman Banta would not be responsible.

According to the evidence, however, there was considerable smoke and steam in the vicinity of signal 30 which restricted the range of vision. Train No. 150 was being operated through territory governed by signals which only display restrictive indications. Engineman Banta said that all of these signals were displaying slow-speed indications when he passed them and that after passing signal 30 he made a light service application of the brakes with the view of bringing his train to a stop if the block signal at 12th Street, the first automatic signal to be encountered, were displaying a stop indication. The type of signals under which he was operating his train had no connection with the presence of a train and could have displayed the same slow-speed indications regardless of whether or not the track was occupied. In view of this situation it is believed that he should have had his train under that degree of control which was necessary in view of the obscured conditions prevailing.

As previously stated, the special instructions in the joint time-table require protection "as prescribed by rules" when a train or engine is stopped, but it did not appear that there were any joint rules stating what this protection should consist of, or defining protection in any way. A situation of this character should be remedied at once instead of leaving the matter to the rules of the individual roads, which may, as in this case differ in their requirements.

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.