

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD AT STANLEY, OHIO, ON APRIL 6, 1929.

July 31, 1929.

To the Commission:

On April 6, 1929, there was a side collision between a freight train and a cut of cars on the New York Central Railroad at Stanley, Ohio, resulting in the death of one employee.

Location and Method of Operation.

Stanley is located in the Toledo Terminal District and this accident occurred in what is known as yard K; 16 tracks in this yard are numbered consecutively from east to west and the accident occurred at the north end of track 14, at the fouling point of this track with the north lead track. All of the tracks in yard K slope slightly downward from each end toward the center, while the yard is lighted at night by means of flood lights. Movements of trains and engines are required to be made in accordance with the rules and under the direction of the general yardmaster and his assistants. On account of track curvature, northbound trains enter the yard at its northern end, thus reversing their time-table direction. Compass directions are used in this report.

The weather was clear and there was a strong wind blowing from the west at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 4.17 a.m.

Description.

Michigan Central transfer engine 7889, headed north, was manned by a Michigan Central crew and in charge of Conductor McMahan and Engineman Gibb. This engine entered the south end of track 14, shoving a caboose ahead of it; the caboose was then coupled to the south end of some standing cars, which in turn were moved northward until two more couplings were made, resulting in the formation of a cut of 60 cars. The entire cut was then shoved northward at a speed estimated to have been from 2 to 4 miles per hour, it being intended to stop clear of the north lead track, but the

engine off the south end, run it around the cut, couple it to the north end, and then haul the cut of cars away as a transfer train. Instead of the cut of cars being brought to a stop in the clear, however, the leading car was shoved into the side of the forty-fourth car in New York Central train No. 95, which was entering the yard on track 15.

New York Central freight train No. 95, which was northbound by time-table directions, consisted of 91 cars and a caboose, hauled by engines 3869 and 3950, and was in charge of Conductor Schickler and Engineer Hoskins and Houser, respectively. On arrival at Stanley this train passed around the curve, entered the yard at the north end, headed down the north lead track and entered track 15. While moving southward on that track at a speed variously estimated to have been from 4 to 10 miles per hour, the side of the forty-fourth car was struck by the cut moving northward on track 14.

The forty-fourth to the fifty-seventh cars in train No. 95 were scraped and damaged, but remained on the track, and the train continued until it was brought to a stop in the clear on track 15. The leading car in the cut shoved by engine 7889 was overturned and the following car was scraped and damaged, but remained on the rails. The employee killed was a car inspector, who was preparing to inspect train No. 95 when it had been brought to a stop.

Summary of Evidence.

Flagman Montrie, of MC engine 7889, stated that after the entire cut was assembled on track 14 he gave a back-up signal in order to stretch the slack. He then gave a proceed signal and the cut had been shoved ahead about 10 car-lengths when train No. 95 arrived, at which time there was a strong wind blowing from the west, forcing smoke down over track 14. When the engines of train No. 95 had passed by him a distance of about seven or eight car-lengths, he could see that track 14 was then clear for about 20 or 25 car-lengths northward but on looking back he noticed smoke blowing down and he at once got on top of the leading car and gave an "easy" signal, followed immediately by stop signals, given when about 18 or 20 car-lengths from the north lead track; he said that he gave the stop signals at this time as a matter of extra precaution

in view of conditions and in order to make sure that the cut of cars would get stopped without incident. On again looking back he saw smoke was still blowing over the cars from the engines of train No. 95 and he could not see the lantern of his head brakeman, who was passing signals to the engineman. Flagman Montrie then got down on the east side of the leading car and while giving stop signals from that position his lantern struck the side of a car in a train that was standing on track 13 and was extinguished. After getting off the car and relighting his lantern, taking only an instant to do so, he tried to signal the head brakeman by swinging the lantern low, as he thought he could see the head brakeman's lantern intermittently. The cut of cars continued northward at a low rate of speed, however, and after four or five cars had passed him he got back on the top of one of the cars, failed to see the lantern of the head brakeman, and again got down on the ground and commenced giving stop signals close to the ground. The cut continued until the accident occurred however, at which time he was about four or five car-lengths away; he immediately gave back-up signals, which were acted upon, the cut being moved back in the clear. Flagman Montrie further stated that the air was not cut in on the cars, and that it was customary for the transfer engine to enter the yard track at the south end, assemble the cut of cars and shove them to the north end of the yard, instead of having the engine enter from the north end of the yard, assemble the cut and then haul the cars to the north end of the yard. It was his understanding that this was done in order to allow the air-brake men to test the air brakes on the cars by means of the yard plant in the north end of the yard. He also stated that in switching service it is customary for a stop to be made immediately when the crew loses sight of the lighted lantern of the man directing the movement.

Head Brakeman Hamlin, of MC engine 7889, stated that he was hanging on the east side of the third or fourth car ahead of the engine at the time the entire cut was assembled. When Flagman Montrie gave a proceed signal he did not accept the first one, but on receiving the second proceed signal the head brakeman passed it on to the engineman, who did not start the movement immediately. The flagman gave

another proceed signal and at this time the movement was started. Head Brakeman Hamlin said he was looking straight ahead, but at no time prior to the accident did he receive a stop signal from the flagman. Head Brakeman Hamlin further stated that he was in plain view of the engineman at all times while passing signals, but that the flagman's lantern was not continuously in his own view, being momentarily obscured by smoke on four or five occasions as the cut was shoved northward. Head Brakeman Hamlin understood that it is required to stop immediately when the lantern of the field man is lost to view for an unreasonable length of time and thought the time taken to travel three or four car-lengths would be an unreasonable length of time for the flagman's lantern to have been lost from view when moving at such a low rate of speed, but in his opinion the cut did not move over one and one-half or two car-lengths at any time without the flagman's lantern being visible, and this lantern was lighted all of the time.

Fireman Weed, of train No. 90, stated that his train was standing on track 13 with the engine headed north and its forward end about two or three car-lengths south of the lead track. He was sitting on his seat box looking ahead and saw the cut of cars just as they were shoved into the side of train No. 95. Fireman Weed estimated the speed of train No. 95 to have been between 5 and 10 miles per hour and that of the cut of cars to have been about 4 miles per hour. About five minutes after the accident, after the cut of cars had been pulled back, he got off his engine and saw a man whom he presumed was a member of the MC transfer crew; this man was about five or six car-lengths south of the point of accident and during the course of the conversation he had with him the man said, "My lantern went out, I was swinging down and my lantern went out." Fireman Weed further stated that the man was very excited, but that to the best of his recollection the man told him that he was giving stop signals from a point about 16 car-lengths south of the lead track.

Car Inspector Wicks stated that his duty was to inspect inbound and outbound trains and that he had taken up a position at the north end of yard K, between tracks 14 and 15 and about one and one-half car-lengths south of the lead track, as train

No. 95 was pulling into the yard on track 15. At the time he stationed himself in that location he looked toward the south and saw a cut of cars, about 30 or 40 car-lengths distant, but was not aware that it was being shoved northward until about half of the cars in train No. 95 had passed him, at which time one of the cars in the cut brushed against his arm. Car Inspector Wick, did not know whether it was the lead car that brushed against his arm, but said that the crash occurred just afterwards and that he immediately ran southward as fast as he could, between tracks 14 and 15, on reaching a point about 20 car-lengths away he crossed over the cut of cars and there saw the flagman of engine 7889, whom he knew personally.

Conductor McMahon, of engine 7889, stated that he was in the yardmaster's office when the accident occurred, he was under the impression that Flagman Montrie understood it was intended that the cut of cars should be left standing where it was after being assembled, and that it was not to be shoved to the north end of the yard. Conductor McMahon stated that it had always been customary with him ever since he had been on this run to leave the cars standing right where they were after all of the couplings had been made, and then cut off the engine, run around the cars, couple to the north end, and haul them northward to the yard air plant. In this connection, however, he stated that while he had never had a cut of cars shoved northward, such as was done in this case, yet he had never issued instructions to the brakemen not to do it and on this particular occasion he felt perfectly safe in permitting these two brakemen to do the work by themselves. Engineman Gibb and Fireman Emerson, of engine 7889, corroborated the statement of Flagman Montrie that it was customary to shove the cars ahead before running around them.

The statements of various other witnesses, including Enginemen Hoskins and Houser, Firemen Lamp and Evans, and Head Brakeman Cosgrove, of train No. 95, Yardmaster Lahey and Sergeant of Police Ellis, NYCRR, developed nothing additional of importance as to what transpired just prior to the accident, except that the two firemen and the head brakeman said they did not notice anyone on the leading car of the cut as their engines passed it.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by a cut of cars being shoved ahead on yard track 14 by MC transfer engine 7889 without due regard for safety, resulting in the leading car striking the side of a car in NYC train No. 95, which was moving down the lead track.

There was conflict in the testimony as to just what Flagman Montrie did after the 60 cars in the cut had been assembled on track 14 and he had given the signal to proceed. According to his own statements he was at the head end of the cut practically all of the time while it was being shoved ahead at a very low rate of speed. None of the various witnesses saw him there, however, and it does not seem reasonable that all of the various stop signals which he says were given could have been missed by Brakeman Hamlin, who appeared to have been riding on the side of a car near the south end of the cut, in position to transmit any signals which might have been given. Apparently there was no good reason why Flagman Montrie should not have been able to couple this track and shove the cars ahead without danger of accident.

All of 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.