

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
NEW YORK, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD NEAR EDWARDS-
VILLE, ILL., ON FEBRUARY 14, 1930

March 8, 1930

To the Commission:

On February 14, 1930, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad near Edwardsville, Ill., which resulted in the injury of five employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on Subdivision 4 of the Clover Leaf District, which extends between Charleston Yard, Ill., and Bridge Junction, near St. Louis, Mo., a distance of 131.5 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred about 3 miles west of the station at Edwardsville, approaching this point from the west there is a 3° curve to the right about 770 feet in length, followed by about 1,170 feet of tangent extending to the point of accident. Approaching from the opposite direction, there are several short tangents and curves, followed by about 600 feet of tangent, a 3° 20' curve to the left which is 485 feet in length, and then about 75 feet of tangent to the point of accident. The grade is descending for several miles for westbound trains, being 0.60 per cent at the point of accident. The track on the curve east of the point of accident passes through a cut which restricts the range of vision from a westbound engine to about 300 feet. Eastbound trains are superior to opposing trains of the same class.

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

Description

Eastbound second-class freight train No. 32, which is operated only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, consisted of 18 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 884, and was in charge of Conductor Franklin and Engineman Daniels. On the day of the accident, which was on a Friday, this train left its initial station, Madison, which is near Bridge Junction and is the last open office, at 7.50 a.m., on time, passed Glen Carbon, 4.5 miles from Edwardsville, at 8.25 a.m. according to the crew, still on time, and collided with train first No. 43 between Glen Carbon and Edwardsville, while traveling at a speed estimated to have been from 15 to 25 miles per hour.

Westbound second-class freight train first No. 43, in charge of Conductor Megley and Engineman Terry, and consisting only of engine 904 and a caboose, departed from Charleston Yard, its initial station, at 4.10 a.m., four hours and five minutes late, and arrived at Edwardsville at 7.40 a.m., where a message was received to pick up cars on various tracks in the yard at that point, some of which were taken from a track about 1 mile west of the station. The train then departed with 12 cars and the caboose at 8.23 a.m., according to the train sheet, at which time it was 1 hour and 24 minutes late, and collided with train No. 32 while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been from 25 to 40 miles per hour.

Engine 884 and its tender were not derailed, but the first three cars in this train were demolished and the fourth car derailed. Engine 904, of train first No. 43, was derailed but remained upright; the first six cars in this train were derailed, three of them being demolished. Both of the engines were badly damaged.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Daniels, of train No. 32, said the speed of his train was about 25 miles per hour when he saw train first No. 43 only 300 feet distant. He at once applied the air brakes in emergency and jumped, and he said he was not positive whether he shut off steam before leaving the engine. He held no orders relating to train first No. 43. The statements of Fireman Womack added nothing additional.

Conductor Franklin and Brakemen Reynolds, McManigell and Hutcheson, of train No. 32, were riding in the caboose, and their statements indicated that their first knowledge of anything wrong was when they felt the air brakes applied in emergency, their train moving only a few car-lengths before the collision occurred. After the accident, Conductor Franklin talked with Engineman Terry, of train first No. 43, and was told by the engineman that he had overlooked train No. 32.

On account of the injuries sustained by Engineman Terry, of train first No. 43, no statement was obtained from him. Fireman Cruze, of the same train, said that after picking up the cars at Edwardsville, there was no conversation between any members of the crew about train No. 32, although he did hear the engineman speak about where they would go for passenger train No. 18. Fireman Cruze had overlooked train No. 32 himself, and he expressed the opinion that all the other members of his crew had done the same thing. It also appeared from the statements of Fireman Cruze that when approaching the point of accident, Brakeman Dowling was the first to observe the approach of train No. 32.

Brakeman Dowling, of train first No. 43, said he was standing on the left side of the cab of the engine and after it came out of the cut east of the point of accident he saw train No. 32 about 10 car-lengths distant. Brakeman Dowling further stated that they were in a hurry to leave Edwardsville, and that in their hurry they forgot train No. 32 and were figuring on going to Peters, the second station west of Edwardsville, for passenger train No. 18.

Conductor Negley, of train first No. 43, said his train left the west end of Edwardsville Yard at 8.20 a.m., and that he had figured on going to Peters for train No. 18. He had entirely overlooked train No. 32, and thought this also was the case with the other members of his crew. He was working at his desk in the caboose when approaching the point of accident, and his first knowledge of anything wrong was when the collision occurred; he had not felt any prior application of the air brakes. The statements of Conductor Negley were corroborated by those of Fireman Griffith.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by overlooking the schedule of an opposing superior train, for which the entire crew of train first No. 43 is responsible.

Train No. 32 is scheduled to operate only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the crew of train first No. 43 overlooked its schedule with the result that they departed westward from Edwardsville about 8.20 a.m., with train No. 32, which was superior by direction, due to leave Glen Carbon, 4.5 miles from Edwardsville, at 8.25 a.m. Every member of the crew of train first No. 43 was a promoted man, with from 14 to 20 years' experience, and the only reason that can be assigned for the occurrence of this accident is the fact that they were in a hurry to leave Edwardsville, and that the train with which they collided was operated only on alternate days.

Examination of the records for a period of 30 days prior to the occurrence of this accident shows that during that period there was a total train movement of 330 westbound trains and 333 eastbound trains, or an average daily movement of slightly more than 21 trains per day. At the time of the accident which occurred near the station at Edwardsville on March 26, 1929, the average daily train movement was slightly more than 23 trains, and in the report covering that investigation recommendation was made that consideration be given to the question of installing an adequate block-signal system. In the case of the accident near Swanville, Pa., which occurred on June 13, 1928, it was found that the traffic density was sufficient to justify the extension of the block-signal system so as to govern train movements of all classes, instead of confining it to passenger movements, as was the case in that particular territory. In the case of the accident at Dean, Pa., on October 25, 1929, reference was made to the block signal recommendations contained in the Edwardsville and Swanville reports, and it was pointed out that plans were under way to install an automatic block-signal system. The circumstances attending those three accidents, all of which were head-end collisions, as well as the one here under investigation, seem to warrant serious consideration by the responsible officers of this railroad of the entire traffic situation on their line, with a view to providing adequate

block-signal protection on all divisions where traffic density is sufficient to warrant the taking of such action.

All 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.