

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE NEW YORK, NEW HAVEN & HARTFORD RAILROAD, AT HARTFORD, CONN., ON APRIL 4, 1925.

July 31, 1925.

To the Commission:

On April 4, 1925, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at Hartford, Conn., resulting in the death of one employee. The Public Utilities Commission of Connecticut participated in the investigation of this accident.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on the Hartford Division approximately  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles east of Hartford passenger station, on the eastbound track of a double-track line, 1,344 feet west of the point of the frog of the gauntlet track over the Connecticut River bridge. At this point the track is located on a fill of 12 to 14 feet, there are no trees or structures in the immediate vicinity to obstruct the view. The grade is 0.19 per cent ascending for eastbound trains. Approaching from the west and beginning at a point approximately 4,000 feet east of Hartford passenger station, the track is tangent for a distance of 2,306 feet, followed by a curve to the right of  $3^{\circ} 44'$  for a distance of approximately 700 feet to the point of accident. The curve continues beyond the point of accident nearly to the west end of Connecticut River bridge, the total length of the curve being 2,181 feet. Train movements on the eastbound track approaching this bridge are controlled by automatic block signal E 98.6 and eastbound train movements over the gauntlet track on Connecticut River bridge are governed by semi-automatic signal E 99.0, located 2,117 feet east of signal E 98.6, controlled from an interlocking tower west of the bridge.

The trains involved in this accident were two work trains which entered upon the eastbound main track between signals E 98.6 and E 99.0 at a switch known as the

Morgan Street connection, located 1,384 feet west of signal E 99.0. Rule 509 provides in part as follows:

"A train or engine entering the main track between block signals, must proceed to the next signal, only as the way is seen to be clear."

The movements of the trains involved were within yard limits. Rule 93 provides in part as follows:

"Second class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear."

The accident occurred at about 7.06 a.m., at which time the weather was clear.

#### Description

On the morning of the accident engine 351, ordered for 6 a.m., was moved westward on track No. 1 from East Hartford roundhouse to Morgan Street connection, having picked up three cars and a caboose. At Morgan Street connection it made a crossover movement and picked up four more cars from a yard track. Extra 351, consisting of engine 351 and seven cars, with Conductor Dickerson and Engineman Brennan in charge, left Morgan Street connection at about 7 a.m., proceeded eastward on track 2, and came to a stop behind a light engine, signal E 99.0 being in stop position due to a portion of a westbound transfer standing on the gauntlet track on Connecticut River bridge. While standing at this point the rear end of extra 351 was struck by extra 129.

Engine 129, which was also ordered for 6 a.m., ran light from East Hartford roundhouse, backed in on the Morgan Street connection, and remained there until the switching movements of extra 351 had been completed. After the departure of extra 351, engine 129 switched a caboose and a coach from one of the yard tracks at Morgan Street connection, replaced on the yard track three or four other cars which it had been necessary to move, then coupled to the coach and caboose on track 2, and at about 7.05 a.m. extra 129, with Conductor Cosgrove and Engineman Buraick in charge, proceeded eastward; it ran a distance of about 800 feet when it collided with extra 351. The speed of extra 129 at the time of the accident was about 10 or 15 miles an hour.

The collision resulted in the death of one work-train employee, the destruction of one work car and considerable damage to the caboose of extra 351, and slight damage to engine 129.

#### Summary of evidence

Engineman Brennan, of extra 351, stated that he stopped his train west of signal E99.0 at about 7.03 or 7.04 a.m. and that the collision occurred two or three minutes afterwards.

According to the statements of Conductor Dickerson, Flagman Hile and Brakeman Levens, of extra 351, they were in the caboose when their train came to a stop near signal E 99.0, Conductor Dickerson was writing at his desk, Flagman Hile and Brakeman Levens were in the cupola watching the switching movements of engine 129. From their caboose there was a clear and unobstructed view of the Morgan Street connection and the track between that point and their caboose. After extra 129 left Morgan Street connection, Flagman Hile started back giving stop signals, and he got back about 125 feet from the rear of his train. As the extra approached he saw Engineman Burdick reading something, apparently a train order; his stop signals were not acknowledged, and as the engine came nearer he shouted to attract Engineman Burdick's attention. Engineman Burdick then looked out but the engine was still using steam as it passed Flagman Hile. Conductor Dickerson, hearing the shouts of Flagman Hile, came out of the caboose and saw the flagman about three car lengths away running back toward the approaching train; the engineman apparently was reading a train order, Conductor Dickerson got back about one car length when the engine of extra 129 passed him. He thought steam was shut off just as the engine passed him. Brakeman Levens got out of the caboose just before the collision occurred.

Engineman Burdick, of extra 129, stated that his view of the caboose of the preceding extra was partially obscured by cars on an adjacent track and piles of ties beside the track, as well as the fact that he was facing directly toward the sun. Just as he started from Morgan Street connection he received a train order which read as follows:

"Eng. C.N.E. 129 works extra 6.50 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., between East Hartford and Wapping protect against extra 3010 east after 8.30 a.m. and against extra 3010 west after 3.30 p.m. not protecting against other extra trains."

Engineman Burdick stated that he immediately read this order aloud to the fireman and while doing so his train moved forward a distance of six or seven car lengths. After reading the order he folded it up, and he stated that for a distance of fully 500 feet approaching the point of accident he was looking ahead but saw only some cars in a transfer train which was standing on track 1. He said he did not run by the flagman, did not see the conductor, that he saw the caboose of extra 351 before the flagman shouted, immediately applying the brakes, and that the flagman was not back but opposite his engine when it stopped after the accident. He stated that he was holding the folded train order in his hand when the collision occurred.

Fireman Dwyer, of extra 129, stated that his train moved five or six car lengths while Engineman Burdick was reading the train order aloud. Afterwards he was on the engine deck and had no warning until the engineman called to him just before the collision occurred.

Conductor Cosgrove stated he handed the engineman's copy of the order to the fireman just as his train was starting eastward on the main track, he then got on the caboose. He said there was an unobstructed view from Morgan Street connection to the point where the rear end of extra 351 was standing and he knew of no reason why Engineman Burdick could not have seen the caboose of extra 351 had he been looking ahead.

Engineman Folan, of the yard transfer train which was standing on track 1 just east of the crossover to Morgan Street connection, stated that while waiting for extra 129 to complete its switching and clear the crossover he was on the left side of the engine next to track 2; from that point he saw the caboose of extra 351 after it had come to a stop west of signal E 99.0, and it was standing at that point when extra 129 departed from Morgan Street connection.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by failure of Engineman Burdick, of extra 129, to maintain a proper lookout and to be prepared to stop before overtaking a preceding train after entering upon the main track between signals and while operating within yard limits.

The investigation clearly established the fact that Engineman Burdick had a clear and unobstructed view of the rear end of the preceding train for ample distance to enable him to stop had he been maintaining a proper lookout.

The weight of evidence is to the effect that instead of looking ahead he was reading a train order as his train approached the point of accident and he failed to see the preceding train until it was too late to avert the collision. The order received by extra 129 was quite long and it is probable that extra 129 proceeded a greater distance than Engineman Burdick realized while he was reading it. The distance travelled by extra 129 prior to the accident was only approximately 800 feet and there can be no excuse for the gross carelessness on the part of Engineman Burdick in neglecting to observe that the track ahead of his train was occupied by a standing train.

Rule 93 provides in part as follows:

"Passenger carrying trains (including work trains, freight trains or any other train on which passengers, caretakers or employees other than those actually engaged in the handling of the train, may be riding) are not relieved from observance of Rule 99 within yard limits."

Rule 99 specifies in detail the method prescribed for protecting a train by a flagman. In this instance Flagman Hile did not have the prescribed flagging equipment, but the evidence is to the effect that he went back, giving stop signals, had Engineman Burdick observed and heeded the flagman's signals this accident undoubtedly would not have occurred.

Engineman Burdick entered the service of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company as fireman in November, 1912, and was promoted to engineman in June, 1918; his record was clear. None of the employees involved in this accident was on duty contrary to the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director, Bureau  
of Safety.