

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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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 READVILLE, MASS., ON JUNE 17, 1925.

September 28, 1925.

To the Commission:

On June 17, 1925, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad at Readville, Mass., resulting in the death of two employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

Location and Method of Operation

This accident occurred within the yard and interlocking limits of Readville, at which point the tracks of the Providence and Midland Division of this railroad intersect. A yard known as Readville Transfer is located in the southeast angle of the intersection, there are two sections of this yard, yard 1 being west of Hyde Park Avenue, while yard 2 is east thereof. There is a mechanical interlocking plant at this point controlled from tower 234, also located in the southeast angle of the intersection of the two divisions, at a point about 350 feet west of the point of accident.

The accident occurred at Hyde Park Avenue at the switch leading from freight main track 2 of yard 1, to track 10 of yard 2. Route signal 52 is located 465.6 feet west of the point of accident, and when it displays a proceed indication it indicates that the route is lined for movements from freight main track 2 to Midland Division track 2. No first-class trains are operated over track 2. Tower 180 is located about 4,000 feet west of tower 234; at this point the tracks leading to Readville Transfer diverge from the Providence Division, connecting with the Midland Division tracks a short distance east of tower 234, near the point of accident. Beginning at tower 180 and proceeding eastward, there are a few short tangents and curves, followed by 1,753 feet of tangent, a curve of $6^{\circ} 16'$ to the left 150 feet in length, a tangent of 400 feet, and then a $6^{\circ} 56'$

curve to the right 339.3 feet in length, the collision occurring on this curve at a point 215 feet from its western end. The grade from tower 180 to the point of accident is 0.71 per cent ascending for eastbound trains. A clear view could be had of the point of accident for a distance of about 475 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 6:25 a.m.

Description

Eastbound freight train symbol O-B 4 consisted of 68 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3329, and was in charge of Conductor Murphy and Engineman Carville. At Readville it was diverted at tower 180 from the tracks of the Providence Division to freight main track 2 of yard 1, and on reaching Hyde Park Avenue it was headed in on track 10 of yard 2, where it was brought to a stop for the purpose of setting out a portion of the train. After this had been done, and while standing with the rear end of the train fouling freight main track 2, the caboose was struck by train N-B 4.

Eastbound freight train symbol N-B 4 consisted of 26 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3328, and was in charge of Conductor O'Leary and Engineman Moulton. At Readville this train was also diverted at tower 180 to freight main track 2, it then passed route signal 52 displaying a proceed indication, which merely indicated that the route was lined for track 2 and thence to Midland Division track 2, and on reaching a point about 465 feet beyond the engine collided with the caboose of train O-B 4 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 12 and 25 miles an hour.

Engine 3328 and its tender, and the caboose and four rear cars in train O-B 4, were derailed, the caboose being totally destroyed while three of the derailed cars in train O-B 4 were badly damaged. The employees killed were the conductor and brakemen of train O-B 4.

Summary of Evidence

Flagman Anderson, of train O-B 4, stated that Conductor Murphy got off the train to carry some bills to the yard office, located in yard 1, about midway between the two towers, and then walked through the yard to tower 234. In the meantime some cars were set out, and while Flagman Anderson was on his way to throw a switch in yard 2 he heard

train N-B 4 approaching, working steam. He crossed over to see which track it was on, and just as he got across he saw the stack of the engine and realized it was very close to the caboose, but was too far away to take any action toward averting the accident, he estimated that he was 10 or 12 car lengths from the rear end of the train. He thought Conductor Murphy returned to the caboose at 6.20 or 6.22 a. m.

Engineman Carville, of train O-B 4, stated that at the time of the accident he was in tower 234 to ascertain when they could depart for Boston, having cut off the engine from the train and spotted it at the water plug, he did not know where the caboose stood until he started to back up after cutting off the engine and at this time saw that it was fouling the switch leading from freight main track 2 to track 10. He heard train N-B 4 approaching but thought it was going to be run around his train, on the adjacent track, freight main track 1, against the current of traffic, saying this is the customary move and is arranged by the tower men in towers 180 and 234 whenever a train is not into clear at the point where his own train was standing. The statements of Fireman Calvin corroborated in substance those of Engineman Carville, he estimated the speed of train N-B 4 to have been about 15 miles an hour just prior to the accident.

Engineman Moulton, of train N-B 4, stated that he saw route signal 52 displaying a proceed indication at which time the speed of his train was about 12 miles an hour. He said he could see the caboose of train O-B 4 just after passing signal 52, but at this time he could not tell whether or not the caboose was fouling freight main track 2 and assumed that it was into clear. On reaching a point about 100 feet from the caboose he saw that it was fouling the track on which his train was moving and immediately shut off steam, applied the air brakes in emergency and sounded the whistle, but the accident occurred before the speed was materially reduced. Engineman Moulton thoroughly understood that signal 52 was purely a route signal, and that it was necessary to proceed under the requirements of yard-limit rules, so as to be able to stop short of any obstruction. Engineman Moulton further stated that he did not think a speed of 12 miles an hour was exceeded between tower 180 and the point of collision, there was other evidence, however, which indicated that train N-B 4 traveled this distance of about 4,200 feet in one minute.

Fireman McFadden, of train N-B 4, stated that signal 52 was displaying a proceed indication and immediately after he called its indication he began to work on the fire, the first intimation he had of anything wrong was when Engineman Moulton shouted and applied the air brakes in emergency, at which time he estimated the speed to have been about 15

miles an hour, the accident occurring immediately afterwards.

Head Brakeman Boyden was riding on the fireman's side of the cab and shortly after passing signal 52 he looked across to tower 234 and waved at the towerman, just as he turned around the engine man shouted, and on looking ahead he saw the rear end of train O-B 4.

Conductor O'Leary, of train N-B 4, was riding in the caboose and was unaware of anything wrong until the collision occurred, at which time he estimated the speed to have been about 25 miles an hour. Flagman Start estimated the speed to have been between 20 and 25 miles an hour.

Towerman Riley, located at tower 234, stated that shortly before the accident Conductor Murphy was in the tower and informed him that his train was into clear, and inquired as to when it could depart. As engine 3329 was going to take water it was decided to let train N-B 4 proceed train O-B 4 and Towerman Riley accordingly lined the route over freight main track 2 and then looked out of the window and watched train N-B 4 approaching, waving to one of the train-men when it was about 200 feet east of signal 52; the first he knew of anything wrong was when the accident occurred, as from the window usually used by him he could not see the caboose of train O-B 4. He did not think the speed of train N-B 4 was any higher than is usual while coming up the grade approaching the point of accident.

Conductor McLeod and Assistant Signal Maintainer Steel were in tower 234 when Conductor Murphy came in. Maintainer Steel said he heard Conductor Murphy inform Towerman Riley in substance that train O-B was into clear. Conductor McLeod said that engine 3328 was working steam just prior to the accident and he estimated the speed of the train to have been between 20 and 25 miles an hour at the time of the collision, he did not hear any conversation between Conductor Murphy and Towerman Riley as to whether or not train O-B 4 was into clear, but he did hear the tower/tell Conductor Murphy that train N-B 4 was going to be run ahead of train O-B 4.

Signal Supervisor Moore stated that a proceed indication can be displayed on signal 52 with a train standing in a similar location to that which train O-B 4 occupied at the time of the accident; there is no electrical control for signal 52, although about a year previously a recommendation was made to interlock signal 52 electrically with the switches.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Moulton, of train N-B 4, to operate his train under proper control within yard limits.

Engineman Moulton admitted he thoroughly understood that home signal 52 was purely a route signal and that when it displayed a proceed indication it merely meant that the route was lined, and that it was necessary to proceed under the requirements of the yard-limit rule, prepared to stop unless the track was seen or known to be clear. The weather was clear and it was daylight, while signal 52 was easily discernible, he saw train O-B 4 standing on track 10 but assumed that the caboose was into clear of freight main track 2, and when he definitely determined otherwise it was too late to avert the accident. Had he complied with the rules this accident would not have occurred.

The testimony is to the effect that Conductor Murphy got off of train O-B 4 as it passed the yard office, after which he proceeded to tower 234 and informed Towerman Riley that his train was into clear, apparently without knowing whether or not this was the case. Had he definitely ascertained the location of the rear end of his train it is probable the towerman would not have cleared signal 52, in which event the accident might not have occurred. A clear signal could not have been displayed had the recommendations as to the locking of the signal with the switch been carried out.

Engineman Moulton entered the service of this railroad as a fireman, August 1, 1902, and was promoted to engineman, September 20, 1912. Conductor Murphy entered the service as a freight brakeman, October 2, 1906, and was promoted to freight conductor, August 3, 1911. All of the other employees involved were also experienced men. 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.