

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

-----

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD AT EARNEST, PA., ON NOVEMBER 1, 1922.

November 20, 1922.

To the Commission:

On November 1, 1922, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad at Earnest, Pa., resulting in the death of 2 employees, and the injury of 1 employee.

Location and method of operation.

This accident occurred on the Trenton Branch of the Philadelphia Division, extending between West Morrisville and Glen Loch, Pa., a distance of 44.5 miles, in the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The accident occurred in a cut about 25 feet in depth, at a switch on the westbound track located approximately 3,000 feet west of WA Block Station; this is a hand-operated, trailing-point switch for westbound trains and leads to a siding about a mile in length and located between the main tracks. Approaching the point of accident from the east the track is tangent for a considerable distance; the grade is slightly descending.

The westbound semi-automatic home signal, located about 100 feet east of WA Block Station, controls the approach of trains to the westbound mechanical advance block signal, located at the entrance to the block in which the accident occurred and about 700 feet west of the home signal. When a caution indication is displayed by the home signal, trains are permitted to proceed to the advance signal, and in the event this signal is displaying a clear indication the train may proceed to the next block station not expecting to find the main track occupied. Before opening the west switch of the middle siding and proceeding out on the westbound main track, the conductor of a westbound train is required to notify the train dispatcher through the operator at WA Block Station, from a telephone booth located approximately 200 feet west of this switch, that the train is ready

to depart, after which, provided permission is secured, the train may proceed. The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at 11.53 p.m.

#### Description.

Westbound freight train extra 3423 consisted of 23 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 3423, and was in charge of Conductor Kipp and Engineman Bissinger. Extra 3423 started to move out on the westbound main track at the west switch of the middle siding, without the conductor having communicated with the operator as required by the rules, and the engine and 11 cars were on the westbound main track when the side of the train was struck by extra 2253, which was on the main track, while traveling at a speed of about 3 or 4 miles an hour.

Westbound freight train extra 2253 consisted of 60 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2253, and was in charge of Conductor Worley and Engineman Gable. This train passed MH Block Station, about 6 miles east of the point of accident, at 11.16 p.m., passed the home signal, which was displaying a caution indication, passed the advance signal, which was displaying a clear indication, and collided with extra 3423 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 12 miles an hour.

Engine 2253 came to rest on its right side against an embankment, badly damaged; seven cars at different points in this train were also derailed, four of them being practically demolished. Two cars in extra 3423 had their right sides badly damaged. The employees killed were the engineman and brakeman of extra 2253.

#### Summary of evidence.

Conductor Kipp, of extra 3423, said that just before his train was ready to depart from the middle siding, he informed Engineman Bissinger and Flagman Updergraff that they were going. While the train was being backed on to the caboose, Conductor Kipp went forward, opened the switch leading to the westbound main track, gave Engineman Bissinger a proceed signal, then stepped over to the eastbound main track, intending to board the caboose from this side, and the train started to move out on the westbound main track without any attempt having been made to communicate with the operator. Conductor Kipp admitted his responsibility for making this movement without obtaining permission from the operator to enter the block, and also said he did not know whether or not flag protection was being provided. Engineman Bissinger stated he was of the impression Conductor Kipp had received

permission from the operator to go out on the main track, as he boarded the engine and issued instructions to depart, he further stated there was ample time at the disposal of Conductor Kipp to have communicated with the operator from the telephone booth in regard to this movement, while the train was being made up. He also thought that rear-end protection was being afforded on this occasion, as Flagman Updergraff had told him not to wait until the switch was closed but to proceed to the water tank, which is 50 or 60 car-lengths beyond the switch, and he would catch the train there, otherwise he would have sounded the engine whistle signal calling for protection to the rear end. Flagman Updergraff said he did not know his train was going to depart, although he admitted telling the engineer to pull down to the water tank without waiting for him. He saw the advance block signal indication change from caution to clear, at which time the caboose of extra 3423 was passing this point, and he remarked that a train must be coming. He further stated when he first saw extra 2253 the engine was opposite his caboose, at which time the markers on the rear of his train were displaying a yellow indication, which indicated to the crew of the approaching train that his own train was clear of the main track, and when he realized his train was not going to stop into clear on the siding, out was proceeding out on the main track, it was too late to flag extra 2253.

Operator West stated when Conductor Kipp reported the accident he asked him why he did not secure permission to depart from the middle siding but Conductor Kipp gave no reason. Assistant Yard Master Mifflin stated that after the accident he asked Conductor Kipp if permission was secured to make this movement and was informed that this was not done.

Fireman Powers, of extra 2253, stated the markers on the caboose of extra 3423 were displaying yellow indications at the time the engine of extra 2253 passed, indicating the train was clear of the main track. He was looking ahead for the engine of that train, and shortly afterwards saw a dark object and shouted to Engineman Gable, the air brakes being applied in emergency just before the accident occurred. None of the other members of this crew was aware of anything wrong until the accident occurred.

#### Conclusions.

This accident was caused by extra 3423 entering a block section between stations without permission, for which Conductor Kipp is primarily responsible.

Rule 365 of the book of rules governing the operation of trains in manual block-signal territory, reads in part as follows:

RULE 365. " \* \* \* A train must not enter a block nor cross from one track to another at a block station, or between block stations, without proper block signals or permission from the signalman.

In the absence of a block signal, the conductor or engineer must obtain from the signalman permission to enter, and ascertain condition of the block."

Had Conductor Kipp obeyed this rule, this accident would not have occurred.

Flagman Updergraff is open to severe censure for his negligence in not protecting his train and not making an effort to stop extra 2253 in time to avert the accident. His train continued to move after an air brake test was made preparatory to departure, he saw the indication of the advance signal change from caution to clear at the time the caboose passed, and was aware extra 2253 was approaching, and he had an unobstructed view of the westbound main track for several hundred feet to the rear of the caboose, furthermore, he was fully aware of the fact his train was ready to depart and should have made it his business to know what movement was intended and acted accordingly. Had he been alert and attentive to his duties he could undoubtedly have flagged extra 2253 in time to have averted the accident.

All of the employees involved were 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,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.