

In re Investigation of accident which occurred
on the Philadelphia & Reading Railway at
Coatesville, Pa., November 5, 1917.

November 28, 1917.

On November 5, 1917, there was a head-end collision between two freight transfer trains on the Philadelphia & Reading Railway at Coatesville, Pa., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of 1 employee. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The collision occurred within yard limits at Coatesville, on the Wilmington & Northern branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway. The Coatesville yard covers 5.1 miles of road. The movements of trains and engines within these yard limits are controlled entirely by yard dispatchers.

Beginning about 3,300 feet north of Coatesville station there is a siding, known as the Pennsylvania Connection Hill siding, which leads to the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. Locomotive 985, in charge of Conductor Hughes and Engineman Franciscus, was sent to this siding to get a train of cars which was to be moved to the south end of the yard. Upon arriving at Pennsylvania Hill it was found that the 24th car in the train had a drawbar out. The conductor then called up the yardmaster by telephone and explained the condition to him; and it was suggested that his locomotive take the cars down to the main track and that he have locomotive 986, which was then standing with a train of cars at the north end of the belt-line track, the north switch of which is located 400 feet south of Hill siding switch, come out onto the main track, couple onto 23 cars of the train and take them away. Nothing was said about permission to occupy the main track. Upon instructions from the conductor of locomotive 985, locomotive 986 proceeded out on the main track and got into clear of the belt line switch; locomotive 985 pulled its cars down from the Hill onto the main track, placed the 24th car, the one with the drawbar out, on the belt line, and locomotive 986, which was in charge of Conductor Jobe and Engineman Wynn, coupled on to the remaining 23 cars. It started southward, backing up and pulling the cars, and had gone 1,030 feet when it collided with locomotive 983, about 2,300 feet north of Coatesville Station.

Locomotive 983, hauling 4 cars and a caboose, was in charge of Conductor Mock and Engineman Sponagle. At 9:23 p. m. the conductor received instructions from the yard dispatcher at the office of the chief yardmaster,

located about one mile south of the point of accident, that his locomotive had right of track to Valley, 1 mile north of Coatesville. It started north and at 9:40 p. m. collided with the cut of cars drawn by locomotive 986.

The accident occurred on a curve about 325 feet in length, about 50 feet from its northern end. Approaching this curve from the north the track is tangent for 700 feet; and approaching from the south it is tangent for 500 feet.

As a result of the collision the rear tender track of locomotive 986 was derailed, and the tender was crushed and forced in against the boiler of the engine. A brakeman on locomotive 986 was killed in the accident. The weather at the time of accident was clear.

Conductor Hughes, of locomotive 985, stated that he called up the yardmaster by telephone, and asked for advice as to the car with the drawbar out; that the yardmaster told him to bring the draft of cars onto the main line, place the disabled car on the belt line, and have locomotive 986 take away the remaining 23 cars. He stated that he then informed the conductor of locomotive 986 about the arrangement; that locomotive 986 came out from the belt line on to the main track; that his own locomotive brought the draft of cars down from the Hill to the main line, the disabled car was shifted onto the belt line, and locomotive 986 coupled to the remaining 23 cars, his locomotive was uncoupled, and locomotive 986 then started away with the cars. Conductor Hughes stated that after talking with the yardmaster the rules required that he should have called up the yard dispatcher and obtained permission to use the main track, which he neglected to do. He stated that he knew that he was not supposed to occupy the main track without permission from the yard dispatcher, and that his failure was due to an oversight.

Conductor Jobe, of locomotive 986, stated that while his locomotive with a train of cars was waiting at the north end of the belt line for a northbound train to pass, he went to the telephone booth at the Hill siding switch, got into communication with the conductor of locomotive 985, and the latter told him that the 24th car from the locomotive was a "shop car." Conductor Jobe stated that in accordance with an agreement between himself and the conductor of locomotive 985 his locomotive was run out on to the main line and gotten into clear of the belt line switch; the draft of cars was brought down from the Hill and one car was dropped down to the belt line; that his locomotive then coupled onto the remaining cars and he told his engineman to pull down the main track to clear

the junction of the belt line with the main track. He stated that he was standing at the Mill siding switch when the collision occurred. He said he thought the conductor of locomotive 985 had permission to use the main track, and neglected to ask him about it.

Yardmaster Bowditch stated that when the conductor of locomotive 985 talked with him over the telephone about the drawbar being broken on the 24th car from the engine, the conductor suggested that locomotive 986 take the remaining 23 cars from locomotive 985; and he answered "All right," but had no further conversation with the conductor. It was his opinion that the speed of locomotive 985 must have been about five or six miles an hour when the collision occurred.

General Yardmaster Kirk stated that movements of all extra trains and yard engines are controlled within Coatesville yard limits by yard dispatchers who are located at the yardmaster's office in the middle of the yard; no yard engines are permitted to use the main track without permission from these dispatchers; and their instructions are to report into clear immediately after performing the movement which they had permission to make.

Rule 105, of the operating rules of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway provides as follows:

"Both conductors and enginemen are responsible for the safety of their trains and, under conditions not provided for by the rules, must take every precaution for their protection."

This accident was caused by locomotive 986 occupying the main track without permission from the yard dispatcher, for which Conductor Jobe and Engineman Wynn of that locomotive, and Conductor Hughes and Engineman Francisous of locomotive 985 are responsible, in that they failed to obtain permission, or to determine whether permission had been obtained, from the yard dispatcher for their respective locomotives to use the main track. Conductor Jobe stated that he was depending upon conductor Hughes to have secured permission for the movements, inasmuch as he had arranged for them; but both admitted their neglect in not communicating with the yard dispatcher, as required by the rules, before using the main track.

Conductor Hughes entered the service of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway as brakeman July 19, 1907, and was promoted to conductor February 10, 1910. Conductor Jobe was employed ~~as brakeman~~ as brakeman September 11, 1912, and was promoted to conductor on November 12, 1915. Both had clear records. At the time of accident the crew of locomotive 985 had been on duty

6 hours 40 minutes; the crew of locomotive 986 had been on duty the same length of time; and the crew of locomotive 983 had been on duty 9 hours 10 minutes.

W. F. B.