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# INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY NEAR COLUMBIA, S. C., ON JANUARY 8, 1925.

February 19, 1925.

To the Commission:

On January 8, 1925, there was a side collision between two switch engines on the Southern Railway near Columbia, S. C., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

## Location and method of operation

This accident occurred within the limits of the yards at Andrews, near Columbia, the movement of both of the engines involved being governed entirely by yard rules. The east and west yards at Andrews are connected by a track known as the straight lead track which is approximately 750 feet in length. This lead track is parallel on the south by a scale track with a crossover connecting the two tracks. The east switch of this crossover is a facing-point switch for westbound movement on the lead track and the point of accident was at the frog of this switch, opposite the yard office. The lead track is tangent and practically level. The weather was foggy and it was about daylight at the time of the accident, which occurred at 6.50 a. m.

## Description

Switch engine 1719, in charge of Yard Conductor Frye and Engineman Harris, was headed west and was hauling three cars out of the west end of the east yard to the lead track, intending to move through the crossover to the scale track and from there to the main track, and it had just started through the crossover switch leading to the scale track when the right side of the engine was struck by the tender of engine 1751. The speed of engine 1719 at the time was estimated to have been about 3 or 4 miles an hour.

Switch engine 1751, in charge of Yard Conductor Hagin and Engineman Peavy, was also headed west and was switching at the east end of the west yard, working on the/straight lead track. It had switched out a caboosc and was backing eastward on the lead track with two cars and four cabooses, moving at a speed of 4 or 5 miles an hour, when the rear of the tender struck the right side of engine 1719.

The right side of the cab of engine 1719 was torn off together with the pump, steam pipes, etc., but none of the equipment was derailed. The employee killed was a switchman attached to the crew of engine 1719.

#### Summary of evidence

Engineman Harris, of engine 1719, when interviewed in the hospital said the switches were properly lined for the return movement of his engine to the main track and that he reduced speed until notified by Yard Conductor Frye, who was riding on the fireman's side of the engine, that engine 1751 was into clear. Although he stated he was looking ahead, his first knowledge of the fact that engine 1751 was backing up was at about the time the collision occurred, without his having time to give the crew of engine 1751 a stop signal. Fireman DeHihnes, who was riding on the fireman's side with Conductor Frye, said he saw engine 1751 a few car lengths ahead of his own engine apparently moving west on the lead track. Engine 1719 then headed into the crossover switch cutting off his view of engine 1751, and the occurrence of the accident was his first knowledge that engine 1751 had started to move back toward his own engine.

Yard Conductor Frye said his engine was approaching the crossover switch at a speed of about 5 miles an hour, that the engineman reduced speed to allow engine 1751 to clear the switch, and then continued at a speed of 3 or 4 miles an hour. Engine 1751 had stopoed when he last saw it and he estimated that it must have moved backward a distance of 2 or 3 car lengths in order to collide with engine 1719. Yard Conductor Frye also stated that the headlight on the rear of the tender of engine 1751 was burning properly as were also the headlights on the front and rear of engine 1719. Switchman Ramsay was riding on the rear of the cut of three cars being handled by engine 1719 and his statements brought out no additional facts of importance.

Engineman Peavy, of engine 1751, said that just prior to the accident the members of his crew were setting out a caboose and before receiving a signal to back up toward the crossover switch he had looked back toward the east yard and had seen the headlights of an engine, but after receiving the signal to back up he did not again look to see where the other engine was located, and he estimated that his engine was moving backward at a speed of 3 or 4 miles an hour when Fireman Eargle called to him to stop. It was at about this time that he looked back and saw engine 1719, the collision occurring almost immediately afterwards. Engineman Peavy further stated that there was nothing to have prevented him from seeing engine 1719 had he looked in that direction. Fireman Eargle said he had seen engine 1719 apparently standing still, that he had so notified Engineman Peavy and had then begun to work on the fire. On finishing this work he got on his seat box, saw engine 1719 on the crossover and called to Engineman Peavy to stop. Yard Conductor Hagin and Switchman Pate and Cook were riding on the rear of the cars being handled by engine 1751 and were not in position to give any further information of importance.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Peavy, of switch engine 1751, to make certain that the track was clear before backing his engine.

Under Rule 98, movements over side tracks and yard tracks are required to be made with caution in the expectation that they may be occupied. Engineman Peavy knew that there was another engine in the vicinity, yet after receiving a signal to back up he did not look back to see whether or not the track was clear for the movement to be made until about the time the accident occurred.

Engineman Harris, of engine 1719, said he was looking ahead but did not see engine 1751 backing toward his engine until the accident occurred. He knew engine 1751 was on the lead track just beyond the switch and it would seem that if he had been paying proper attention he would have seen it backing toward the switch in time to have sounded a warning and possibly avert the accident.

The employees involved were experienced men; at the time of the accident the members of both crews had been on duty nearly 8 hours after 16 hours or more off duty.

Respectfully submitted,

W P BORLAND  
Director.