

## INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE  
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
SOUTHERN RAILWAY AT KINGVILLE, S. C., ON OCTOBER  
30, 1926.

November 27, 1926.

To the Commission.

On October 30, 1926, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Southern Railway at Kingville, S.C., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two livestock caretakers and two employees.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Charleston Division extending between West End and Columbia, S. C., a distance of 106.6 miles over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The point of accident was 4,610 feet east of the west yard-limit board, approaching this point from the east the track is tangent a distance of about 2 miles, while approaching from the west there is a  $4^{\circ} 30''$  curve to the right followed by 350 feet of tangent to the point of accident. The grade is practically level. There is no designated passing track at Kingville, and it is the practice to use the east and west legs of the wye for the purpose of meeting and passing trains.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 5 a.m.

Description

Eastbound freight train extra 866 consisted of 74 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 866, and was in charge of Conductor Youngblood and Engineman Abney. At

Andrews the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 9, which provided in part for a meet with extra 715 at Singleton, 10.5 miles east of Kingville. Extra 866 was approaching Kingville and had entered the yard limits when it collided with extra 715 while traveling at a low rate of speed, estimated to have been from 3 to 5 miles an hour.

Westbound freight train extra 715 consisted of 27 cars and a caoose, hauled by engine 717, and was in charge of Conductor Turbeville and Engineer Heidt. At Orangeburg, 26.2 miles east of Kingville, the crew in charge received a copy of train order No. 12, reading as follows:

"Extra 866 east get this order and meet extra 715 west at Kingville instead of Singleton".

Extra 715 entered Kingville yard, passed the west leg of the wye where it should have backed into clear for extra 866 in accordance with the usual practice prevailing at that point, and collided with extra 866 while traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been between 20 and 35 miles an hour.

Both engines were derailed but remained upright on the roadbed, considerably damaged. One car in each train was demolished, while another car was considerably damaged. The employee killed was a student fireman on extra 715.

#### Summary of evidence

Engineman Heidt, of extra 715, said that when approaching Kingville he was speculating as to whether he would reach that point prior to the arrival of extra 866, in which event he would be able to pull ahead on the main track and back in on the west leg of the wye instead of heading in on the east leg of the wye. After passing over a trestle located about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Kingville, however, he fell asleep and did not know anything more until he began crawling out of the wreckage after the occurrence of the accident. At the time of the accident he had been on duty about 9 hours after being off duty between 9 and 10 hours, and he said it was his

practice to obtain his rest, that he had done so while off duty prior to the trip on which this accident occurred, and that he was in normal physical condition, and he offered no explanation for going to sleep other than the fact that he had been a little bilious and had had a headache.

At the time of the accident the student fireman, who was killed, was the only other person on the engine, both the regular fireman and the head brakeman being in the caboose. Fireman Creighton said he had obtained the engineer's permission to go back to the caboose for the purpose of eating, and that he saw Flagman Neal apply the air brakes by means of the conductor's valve just before the accident occurred. Head Brakeman Bolchoz said that when the train entered the yard he went out on the caboose platform to be in readiness to get off and open the switch so that the train could back in on the west leg of the wye. On looking ahead, however, he saw the headlight of extra 866, realized that a collision was about to occur and jumped to the ground, at which time the speed of his train was about 20 or 25 miles an hour. He said he had realized that the speed was excessive when entering Kingville yard but that he had not mentioned it to anyone. Brakeman Bolchoz did not see any one open the conductor's valve, although at about the time the caboose passed the west wye switch he heard the conductor tell one of the brakemen to apply the brakes.

Conductor Turbeville, of extra 715, said that when his caboose had passed a switch which is located about 1,900 feet east of the telegraph office he climbed down from the cupola, went out on the caboose platform and signalled to the engineer to stop. He continued to give stop signals until about the time the caboose reached the west wye switch, and then called to Flagman Neal to open the conductor's valve, the collision occurring shortly afterwards while the train was running at a speed he estimated to have been about 20 miles an hour. The speed of his train was excessive when entering Kingville yard, but he did not pay any particular attention to it as such speed was customary when the engineer intended to proceed to the west wye switch. Conductor Turbeville did not comply with rule 90 of the rules of the operating department by giving the prescribed hand signal when his train was 1 mile from the point where a meet order was to be executed. Conductor Turbeville

further stated that when approaching Kingville it was customary for the engineer to decide whether to head in at the east wye switch or proceed to the west wye switch, depending on whether or not the opposing train had arrived, although under the rules his train in this particular case, being inferior by direction, would not have any right to the main track beyond the east wye switch. He considered, however, that he had a right to pass this switch and proceed to the west switch because of the rule governing movements within yard limits, which requires extra trains to move prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

Flagman Neal said that when the train was approaching Kingville he saw Conductor Turbeville come down from the cupola of the caboose and go out on the rear platform, and that he and Brakeman Boldt followed the conductor. About opposite the switch mentioned by the conductor the latter began giving stop signals and finally told him to open the conductor's valve, the collision occurring shortly after this had been done.

Engineman Aoney, of extra 866, said when approaching Kingville he saw the reflection of a headlight and supposed that the order for him to meet extra 715 at Singleton had been changed and that they would meet at Kingville instead of at Singleton. He then brought his train under full control and prepared to bring it to a stop far enough west of the west wye switch to give extra 715 a chance to pull by and back in at that point. Shortly afterwards it appeared to him that extra 715 was not being brought to a stop, and he sounded the whistle and at the same time applied the brakes. He estimated the speed of his own train at the time of the accident to have been not more than 3 miles an hour, and the speed of extra 715 to have been about 35 miles an hour. After the accident engine 715 was still working steam, which caused him to think that steam had not been shut off prior to the occurrence of the accident.

#### Conclusions

This accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order, for which Engineman Heidt is responsible.

Engineman Heriot acknowledged his responsibility for the accident, saying that he fell asleep when some distance out of Kingville and that the next thing he knew he found himself crawling out of the wreckage after the occurrence of the accident. The only other person on the engine at the time was the student fireman, who was killed in the accident, and of course nothing is known as to what he was doing immediately prior to the accident or whether he had any opportunity of realizing that the engineman might be asleep.

Under the rules Conductor Turbeville should have given a signal with his lantern when 1 mile from Kingville to indicate the approach of his train to the meeting point, which signal should have been acknowledged by the engineman, and the rules further provide that should either the conductor or the engineman fail to give the prescribed signals the train is to be brought to a stop. This rule was not complied with either by the conductor or by the engineman. Had Conductor Turbeville obeyed the rule he would have had an opportunity of stopping his train before the accident occurred.

It is also provided by the rules that the inferior train at a meeting point shall head in at the first switch of the first siding, which in this case would have required extra 715 to head in at the east wye switch. It was the custom in the case of ~~an~~ westbound train, however, if the opposing train had not arrived, to pull by and back in at the west wye switch, an additional distance of nearly 3,000 feet. Such a custom involves a violation of the rule just referred to and creates a situation well calculated to result in just such an accident as occurred in this instance, where for any reason a train fails to stop as required by its orders. Kingville is a point where trains frequently meet and pass and has no designated passing track, this fact probably resulting in the development of the practice involved in this accident of pulling by and backing in. The installation and use of a passing track suitable to the requirements of the service would eliminate the practice which now exists, which involves a violation of the rules every time it is followed.

Had an adequate automatic train control device been in use this accident would not have occurred.

The employees involved were experienced men and 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. BOPLAND,

Director.