

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE TEXAS AND PACIFIC RAILWAY NEAR ADDIS, LA., ON NOVEMBER 9, 1921.

December 7, 1921.

To the Commission:

On November 9, 1921, there was a side collision between a passenger train of the Texas & Pacific Railway and a light engine of the St. Delphine Sugar Plantation at the intersection of their tracks near Addis, La., resulting in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 1 passenger, 3 employees and 1 mail clerk.

Location and method of operation.

That part of the Louisiana Division on which this accident occurred extends between New Orleans and Addis, La., a distance of 90.1 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. The crossing at which this accident occurred is located about 4,100 feet east of Addis; approaching this crossing on the Texas & Pacific Railway the track is tangent for several miles in each direction, while the grade is practically level. The narrow-gauge, single-track line of the sugar plantation railway crosses the track of the Texas & Pacific Railway nearly at right angles. On account of a field of sugar-

cane growing close to the tracks, neither engineman could tell whether there was any train approaching on the other railway until within a few feet of the crossing. The accident occurred at about 2.49 p.m., at which time the weather was cloudy.

Description.

St. Delphine Sugar Plantation southbound light engine 1 was in charge of Engineman Costa and Brakeman Anderson. This engine left the refinery moving backward, reduced speed but made no stop in advance of the crossing, and while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 3 and 4 miles an hour, was struck on the crossing by Texas & Pacific passenger train No. 23.

Westbound passenger train No. 23 consisted of 1 baggage car, 1 combination mail and baggage car, 2 coaches, 2 Pullman sleeping cars, and 1 dining car, of all-steel construction, in the order named, hauled by engine 360, and was in charge of Conductor Armitage and Engineman Weldman. This train left Plaquemine, 4.7 miles from Addis, at 2.40 p.m., 2 minutes late, and collided with the light engine while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 35 miles an hour.

Engine 360 came to rest on its right side, completely turned around, at a point about 80 feet beyond the crossing, on a siding which parallels the main track on the south, the tender came to rest on the opposite side of

the main track. The first two cars, and the front truck of the third car, were derailed to the right. The plantation engine came to rest northwest of the crossing, or on the north side of the Texas & Pacific track, in a badly damaged condition. The employee killed was the engine-man of the passenger train.

Summary of evidence.

Fireman Boudreaux, of train No. 23, stated that approaching the crossing steam had been shut off, the air brakes were applied, and two long and two short blasts of the whistle had been sounded, he was sitting on the left side of the cab and the first knowledge he had of anything wrong was when the engineman reached for the brake valve, at about which time the accident occurred. Conductor Armitage, who was riding in the third car at the time of the accident, said he heard three short blasts of the whistle, which were followed by an application of the air brakes, and the shock of the collision, Elagman Rodick also heard three short blasts of the whistle.

The crew of the plantation engine consisted only of an engineman and brakeman. The brakes of this engine were operated by steam. Brakeman Anderson was riding on the rear end of the tender of the plantation engine, and when it was near enough to the crossing to enable him to see around the sugar-cane, which comes to within 25 or 30 feet of the track of the Texas & Pacific Railway, he saw

the passenger train coming, got off and gave a stop signal to his engineman, and also called to him. The statements of Engineman Costa indicated that he saw the brakeman's stop signal and the approaching train at about the same time, and that he at once applied the steam jam brake, but that it failed to work, and when about 10 feet from the crossing he reversed the engine, but did not open the throttle, and then jumped. Both Engineman Costa and Brakeman Anderson estimated the speed of the plantation engine at 3 or 4 miles an hour, and said three blasts of the whistle were sounded approaching the crossing. Engineman Costa further stated that the steam brake worked properly when tested at the factory, a few minutes before the accident occurred, although at the crossing he noticed steam escaping from underneath, as though from a broken pipe. He thought the accident was caused by his inability to stop the engine. Engineman Costa said he had been instructed to stop and ascertain that the way was clear before using the crossing, but that when operating a light engine, it was his practice only to reduce speed and then to pass over the crossing without stopping.

General Foreman Bird, of the sugar plantation, stated that the engine had been recently overhauled, and that just before it left the refinery on the morning of the accident, the steam brake was working properly. He also said that with a train of loaded cane cars, traveling at a speed of between 3 and 4 miles an hour, a stop could

be made within 20 or 25 feet, and that at the same speed without cars the engine could be stopped immediately.

Superintendent DeFrance, of the Texas & Pacific railway, who was riding in the fifth car at the time of the accident, said the station whistle was sounded several hundred feet east of the crossing, while General Superintendent Earl said a State law permits trains to pass over tram crossings without stopping.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of the engine of the sugar plantation railway to be brought to a stop before passing over the crossing.

The steam brake on the plantation engine had been tested and worked properly before the engine left the factory, a few minutes before the occurrence of this accident, and had Engineman Costa been operating his engine with the intention of stopping before passing over the crossing, as required by his instructions, undoubtedly he would have discovered any trouble with the brake which might have existed, and in that event would probably have been able to reverse the engine and bring it to a stop before it reached the crossing. The crew of the plantation engine were aware of the fact that trains of the railway company operated constantly over this crossing, and also that the vision was very much restricted on account of the field of sugar-cane extending to within a few feet of the Texas &

Pacific track.

Engineman Costa had been operating the engine for the sugar plantation railway for the past three sugar-cane seasons, on an average of about 2 months a year; he had not had any previous accidents of this character.

Respectfully submitted,

W.P.BORLAND,

Chief, Bureau of Safety.