

CIRCULATED

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILROAD, NEAR BOYCE, LA.,
ON NOVEMBER 15, 1918.

February 15, 1919.

On November 15, 1918, there was a rear end collision between two freight trains on the Texas & Pacific Railroad, near Boyce, La., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of three employees.

After investigation, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Marshall sub-division of the Eastern Division on which this accident occurred, extends from Marshall, Texas, to Boyce, La., a distance of 141.5 miles. It is a single track line upon which train movements are governed by time table and train orders transmitted by telegraph. No block signal system is in use.

The trains involved in this accident were eastbound extras 452 and 210. Extra 452 was in charge of Conductor Thompson and Engineman McNew, and at the time of the accident consisted of engine 452, 45 loaded cars, 1 empty car and a caboose. It passed Cypress, the last open telegraph office west of Boyce, at 4.40 a.m. and at about 7.45 a.m. stopped with its rear end 1287 feet east of the west yard limit board at Boyce, where the engine left the train and ran to Boyce station, approximately 3 miles distant, for water. The engine had returned to the train and coupled on, and the engineman was

pumping off the brakes preparatory to starting, when the collision occurred, about 8.15 a.m. It was raining at the time of the accident, and the weather was foggy.

Extra 210 consisting of engine 210, 47 loaded cars and caboose, in charge of Conductor Barner and Engineman Suhler, left Cypress at 5.35 a.m., and at about 8.15 a.m., while running at a speed variously estimated from 5 to 15 miles an hour, collided with the rear end of extra 452 as above stated. The collision resulted in the death of Conductor Thompson and the injury of Student Brakeman Adams of extra 452, and the slight injury of Road Foreman of Engines Brown and Fireman Ayers of extra 210.

Engine 210 telescoped the wooden caboose of extra 452, crushed the next car ahead, and derailed the second car ahead. The engine was overturned and came to rest down an embankment to the left of the track, at an angle of about 80 degrees therewith. The caboose caught fire, which spread to and destroyed the two cars just ahead, and also damaged the engine. The tender of engine 210 had its trucks torn loose from the frame; the tender frame buckled and lay crosswise the track, while the cistern was thrown off the frame to the right of the track and came to rest in an upright position fouling the track. The first car behind the tender was derailed to the right with its front end down the embankment about 25 feet from the track, its rear end remaining coupled to the train.

Approaching the scene of accident from a point 1 1/2 miles west thereof, there is a one degree curve to the left for a distance of 2300 feet, followed by a tangent 615 feet long, and then a one degree curve to the right 1150 feet long, which reduces to a 36 minute curve extending to and beyond the point of accident. The grade over this stretch of track is slightly ascending eastward for a distance of about a mile, and slightly descending for the remainder of the distance.

Engineer McNew of extra 452 stated that when near Boyce he ran out of water, and whistling out a flag, cut off his engine and went into Boyce. In about half an hour he returned, coupled up, and was pumping off the brakes when, at 8.15 a.m., the collision occurred. The impact was not severe, resulting merely in moving his engine about six or seven feet, parting the train, and setting the brakes. It was raining and foggy and he could not see more than a thousand feet ahead at the time. He stated that when he stopped to go for water, he did not know whether the rear of his train was within the yard limits of Boyce, but understanding that it was necessary to protect the rear of his train at all times, he whistle out a flag for that purpose. Furthermore, he was on a curve and the weather was foggy, and this condition made it all the more necessary to protect his train. He stated that he had not been examined on the rules since 1914.

Assistant Road Foreman of Engines Sweet, who was riding on engine 452, stated that the condition of the

engine was good, but on account of having a heavy train they ran out of water near Boyce. When approaching the yard the engineman was letting the train roll at about five miles an hour, then almost came to a stop, set the air, whistled out a flag, cut off, and went on into Boyce. The weather, he stated, was rainy and a little foggy.

Head Brakeman Duffy stated that his train stopped at several places along the way and when near Boyce the engine was cut off and they ran into that point for water. A hard rain was falling, and after the engine returned, no sooner was a coupling made, than he felt the impact, as he thought, of some cars coupling onto his rear. He went back to see what was wrong and found that the draw bar had been knocked under the tenth car from the engine and the car derailed. He did not hear his engineman signal for flag protection when train stopped, but knew he was within the Boyce yard limits at the time.

Rear Brakeman Booth stated that when his train stopped west of Boyce he heard the signal from the engine to protect the rear of the train. He was in the caboose at the time and started to go back but was told by Conductor Thompson to go to the head end, the conductor stating that he would attend to the rear. He did not know whether his train was within the Boyce yard limit board at the time, but knew that he was on a curve and when he saw extra 210 rounding this curve he was about 1000 feet ahead of the rear of his train. He stated that engine 210 was working steam at the time and he

could hear its exhaust, but he heard no whistle.

Conductor Garner of extra 210 stated that after leaving Marshall he went to Shreveport, where he picked up 47 cars of oil, then moved via the branch line and came back to the main line at Cypress, where he was delayed for three hours by No. 420 and extra 452. On account of the rain and fog he could not see the head end of his train, but experienced no difficulty until he struck 452. He thought the speed of the train when the engineman applied air in emergency was about 12 miles an hour. He stated that part of his train was within yard limits when it stopped and that it did not approach these limits under control, as required by rule. He said the rule was not generally observed, as it was customary for trains standing within yard limits to flag against approaching trains and thus warn them that the main line was occupied. This had been done on previous occasions, and he thought if the practice had been followed in the present instance the accident would not have occurred. He admitted that the accident could have been averted if the rule had been complied with, but said the rule was not generally followed, and to comply with it would not enable any one to "get anywhere;" he said, however, that if he had been with the engineman he would have seen to it that the yard limits were approached under control.

Engineman Buhler stated that in approaching the Boyce yard limit board he first noticed the caboose of extra 452 on the main line when about eight or nine telegraph poles (about 1400 feet) back of it. His speed then was about 15 miles an

hour. It was foggy and dark and as he approached a railroad crossing he made a light application of the brakes. He then looked out and saw the outline of 452's caboose and immediately shut off steam and made an emergency application. The air did not seem to hold so well as usual, and he had no time to whistle, but his speed was reduced to about five miles an hour when he struck. He knew that the rule required him to come into yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track was seen or known to be clear, but stated that the custom was for trains occupying the main track there to protect themselves by flagging against following trains, and he expected that this custom would be observed as on previous occasions.

Fireman Ayers corroborated the statements of Engineman Buhler and stated that the first intimation he had of a train standing within yard limits was when the engineman applied the air in emergency.

Road Foreman of Engines Brown, who was with the engine crew of extra 210, stated that he first saw the caboose of extra 452, after the engineman applied air in emergency. They were on a curve at the time, and this together with the fog as well as frost on the window, obscured his view. When the emergency application was made the air did not seem to take hold immediately, weather conditions having a bad effect on the rail, which in turn caused the engine to slip. He stated that the speed of his train approaching Boyce was about 20 miles an hour, and had been reduced to about 12 or 13 miles per hour when the collision occurred. He placed responsibility for the

accident with those who failed to comply with Rule 93, although, he stated, the rule was not generally lived up to even by officials of the road, and had been to a certain extent done away with by the custom of flagging within yard limits.

Head Brakeman Nelson stated that he first noticed the caboose of extra 452 when enginemen applied the air. The distance between the trains then, he thought, was about six or eight telegraph poles, and the speed of his train about 12 miles an hour. He stated that he did not know what protection the yard limit board afforded, nor did he know what the rule was, but he thought and had been instructed that when a train stopped his duty was to flag in all cases. He had not been examined on the rules nor did he have a copy of them.

Rear Brakeman Maddux stated that the yard limit boards are put up to protect trains that enter inside the board, but it has been customary for trains standing there to flag against approaching trains as an additional precaution. It has been his own practice to flag when standing in yard limits, and he has been instructed to do so by conductors. He was last examined on the rules in 1908.

Thomas Neal, yardmaster at Boyce, stated that he did not consider it necessary under the rule for a train within yard limits to protect itself by flagging except against first class trains, the yard limit boards affording sufficient protection against other classes of trains. He admitted that other than first class trains were frequently flagged by direction of officials and otherwise, but stated that this was done as an

additional safeguard, particularly in foggy weather. He said that he had never been examined on the rules and had made no special study of them.

G. H. Curry, an engineman operating over the Marshall sub-division, stated that he has been on this division since 1909 and is acquainted with conditions. He said that in approaching the Boyce yard limits his custom has been to have his train under control, but in addition he would expect to find trains standing on the main line there flagging against approaching trains, since this was the usual practice.

Dispatcher Harris corroborated the statements of others with respect to flagging practice in the Boyce yard limits and also stated that he had heard that the yard board has on some occasions been moved and is not looked upon as affording full protection. He thought that if Rule 93 had been complied with the accident would not have occurred.

Division Superintendent McCullough stated that he knew of but one case, and that was an unusual one, where a freight train within the Boyce yard limits had to flag against an approaching train other than first class. He stated that the practice within the Shreveport yard limits is different, but this is due to peculiar conditions. He attributed the accident to the failure of engineman of extra 210 to comply with the rule, and stated that the reason for many of the employees on the division not having a book of rules was because of war conditions and the influenza which necessitated the hiring of many new men and exhausted the

supply.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Buhler and Conductor Barner of extra 210 to comply with Rule 93, which reads as follows:

Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first class trains. Second and inferior class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

The investigation disclosed that the practice of flagging within Boyce yard limits under similar circumstances was common; in fact, the practice had become so general as to cause employees to rely upon the practice rather than the rule. This state of affairs may in part be accounted for by the fact that many of the employees on this division have not been examined on the rules for several years, officials themselves have made frequent exceptions to the rule, and many of the men have not even been furnished with a copy of the Rules. This condition demands immediate correction in the interest of safe operation.

The crew of extra 452 had been on duty at time of accident about 16 hours and 30 minutes. The engineman had been off duty prior to beginning the trip 72 hours, conductor 12 hours and the others from 12 to 48 hours. The crew of extra 210 had been on duty about 16 hours and 40 minutes. Before beginning this trip the engineman had been off duty 72 hours, the conductor 10 hours, and the others from 10 to 24 hours.

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