

December 29, 1911.

MEMORANDUM TO COMMISSIONER McCHORD  
relative to accident on the Texas & Pacific Railway,  
October 20, 1911.

Draft submitted by the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances  
as a basis for the report of the Commission.

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On October 21, 1911, the Texas & Pacific Railway reported by telegraph a collision occurring at Marshall, Texas, on October 20, 1911, between runaway light engine No. 239 and passenger train No. 4. This accident was investigated by Inspector Lawson, who was in the vicinity at the time. A synopsis of his report is given below.

East-bound passenger train No. 8, arrived at Marshall at 1:35 A. M., on October 20, hauled by engine No. 239. On the arrival of this train Hostler Harvey took charge of the engine and proceeded toward the roundhouse in the opposite end of the yard, using track No. 1. When this engine reached a point about one-half mile from the station, it collided head-on with west-bound freight extra No. 235, which was pulling into the east end of the yard on the same track, without a headlight. Before the collision, the employees on engine No. 239 jumped, after the engine had been reversed and the throttle opened. The force of this collision was very slight, damaging the pilot of each engine and injuring no one. Both engines had nearly stopped when the collision occurred. Engine No. 239 immediately started backward, with the throttle wide open, and when it

reached the station it collided with engine No. 332, which was being uncoupled from train No. 4, which had arrived at Marshall at 1:40 A. M.

Marshall is a division terminal, and is the end of the run for train No. 8. Both the engine and engine crew are changed at this point, and the equipment of the train leaves for New Orleans as train No. 54 after certain cars from train No. 4 have been attached to it. When this collision occurred, a switch engine was coupling onto the rear end of train No. 4, preparatory to transferring the two rear sleeping cars to train No. 54. This coupling was being made by Switchman Hall, and the force of the collision pushed the train back several feet, injuring Switchman Hall to such an extent that he died a few hours later. This collision also resulted in injuries to 4 other employees and to 1 news agent, 4 postal clerks and 12 passengers, besides badly damaging engines Nos. 239 and 332 and slightly damaging the equipment of train No. 4. All injuries sustained by passengers and others on train No. 4 were the result of being knocked down, as the train had just come to a stop and the passengers were getting on and off. At the time of this collision the speed of engine No. 239 was estimated to be about 40 miles per hour.

In the handling of light engines through yard limits, as in this case, they are supposed to be handled under control, in order that they may be stopped in time to prevent a collision in event the track is found to be occupied. The hostlers employed at Marshall are required to take engines to and from passenger trains and the roundhouse, and in doing this they

use track No. 1, if it is clear, in order to avoid handling switches at the east end of the yard. There is a grade of 1 per cent approaching the east end of Marshall Yard, and if the tracks are not kept clear and the switches lined up for west-bound freight trains entering the yard, they frequently stall on this grade and it is necessary for switch engines to pull them into the yard. In order to avoid this difficulty, track No. 1 is usually kept clear and the switches lined up.

It is the practice at Marshall for the Chief Dispatcher to furnish to all concerned, a list showing the time of the expected arrival of all trains for a stated period. The list issued from the dispatcher's office at 12:30 A.M., October 20, showed trains Nos. 8 and 4, and extra No. 235, as being due at about 1:40 A.M. The night foreman of the roundhouse was in the dispatcher's office when this list was issued and his attention was particularly called to the fact that extra No. 235 was coming in without a headlight. He did not, however, notify Hostler Harvey of this fact.

Near the point of the collision between engines Nos. 239 and 235, there is a curve of two degrees. On the inside of this curve are two tracks, on which were a number of bad order cars, and these obstructed the view until the engines were within a short distance of each other.

When engine No. 239 was on its way to the roundhouse, using track No. 1, it was being run by Hostler Harvey

at an estimated speed of from 12 to 20 miles per hour. On this engine with the hostler were Night Roundhouse Foreman Norman and Helper Nelson. The first knowledge the hostler had of the approach of extra No. 235 was when the foreman, who was on the left-hand side of the cab of the locomotive, called to him to "look out." At this time they were about 150 feet from the point of the collision. Immediately after shouting this warning to the hostler, the foreman and the helper jumped from the engine. The hostler at once reversed the engine and opened the throttle. He also claims that he applied the air brakes in the hope of stopping, then released them just before the collision, and jumped.

The engineman of extra No. 235 states that he saw the reflection of the electric headlight on engine No. 239 some time before the collision, but thought the light belonged to an engine standing on the roundhouse track.

The weather at the time of the accident was clear and cold. None of the employees had been on duty in excess of the statutory period, and all had had the required period of rest before going on duty. The service record of all these employees showed that they were reliable men.

The mail car of train No. 4, which was next to engine No. 332, was a steel car, and the baggage car immediately behind it had a steel underframe. The construction of these two cars undoubtedly lessened the effect of the second collision.

These accidents were caused by Hostler Harvey, who

ran engine No. 239 at a rate of speed not safe in yard limits, thus causing it to collide with extra No. 235, just prior to which all the employees jumped from the engine. After the collision it moved backward at full speed until it collided with engine No. 332, of passenger train No. 4. A contributing cause was the failure of Foreman Norman, whose attention had been particularly called to the fact that extra No. 235 was due at about 1:40 A. M. without a headlight, to properly notify the hostler, who was under his jurisdiction.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of  
Safety Appliances.