

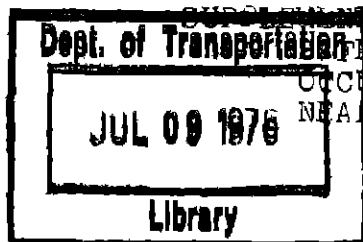
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U. S. Interstate Commerce Commission

Supplemental report on accident
Report No. 1001-1050 SI 1001

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION



SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE PHILADELPHIA & READING RAILWAY NEAR NICETOWN, PA., ON NOVEMBER 1, 1923

November 31, 1924.

To the Commission:

A supplemental investigation has been made of the derailment of a milk train which occurred on the Philadelphia & Reading Railway near Nicetown, Pa., on November 1, 1923, resulting in the death of three employees,

Summary of report of December 3, 1923

That part of the Philadelphia Division on which the accident occurred is a double-track line with a parallel yard track known as the third track, the automatic block-signal system did not protect movements over the third track, which was used whenever it was desired to run trains around other trains which might be occupying either or both of the main tracks. Trains moving in either direction were so detoured, an estimate being made that the number of detoured trains was about 30 each week. These movements were made under the verbal authority of a yardmaster, no train orders being issued, nor were there any bulletins or written instructions of any kind covering the use of the track in this manner, it being merely a practice which had existed for years. This third track was $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles in length, within which distance there were 15 switches, not including the main-track switches at either end, 7 of these switches were facing-point switches for northbound movements while none of the 15 was equipped with a lamp.

The accident occurred early in the morning, before daylight, and was due to one of the facing-point switches being open, resulting in the train running in on a spur track. The curvature of the turnout was $39^{\circ} 30'$, while the engine was not designed for curves of more than 20° . The switch lock was found to be defective and when turned in a certain position could be opened without a key.

The report pointed out that the use of this third track as an auxiliary main track was not surrounded with the proper safeguards in view of the fact that trains were operated on verbal instructions and the additional fact that there were so many facing-point switches, without lamps, to be encountered by a train moving in either direction.

Results of supplemental investigation

Since the occurrence of the accident instructions have been issued discontinuing the operation of trains over the third track, other than switch engines engaged in switching service, except when absolutely necessary and then only when the main track is obstructed, and a man is stationed on the front end of the engine of all such detoured trains for the purpose of watching for misplaced switches. The train which was involved in the accident has not been run over the third track since that time. It also appears that switch lamps have been placed on all switches and that the track walkers have been instructed to pay particular attention to the condition of the switch locks.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND

Director.