

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE ILLINOIS TRACTION SYSTEM NEAR DAVIS, ILL., ON MARCH 20, 1925.

July 29, 1925.

To the Commission:

On March 20, 1925, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a work extra on the line of the Illinois Traction System near Davis, Ill., which resulted in the death of 6 passengers and 1 employee. The investigation was made in conjunction with representatives of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern division extending between Springfield, Ill., and St. Louis, Mo., a distance of 98.3 miles, this being a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system; the signal system, however, was not in working order on the day of the accident. The point of accident was about 600 feet south of the south switch of the passing track known as Davis. Approaching this point from the south the track is tangent for more than 1 mile, followed by a $2^{\circ} 03'$ curve to the right 1,278 feet in length, the accident occurring on the curve about 400 feet from its southern end. Approaching from the north there is a 1° curve to the right 950 feet in length and 1,344 feet of tangent, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is descending for northbound trains, being 1.06 per cent at the point of accident. The walls of a cut south of the curve, as well as some trees on the inside of the curve near its southern end, restrict the view to about 1,000 feet from either direction.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 1.05 p.m.

Description

Southbound passenger train No. 7 consisted of motor 250, of wooden construction, in charge of Conductor Roberts and Motorman Peele. It left Carlinville, Ill., 4.4 miles from Davis, at 12.55 p.m., 20 minutes late, passed Davis, and had been brought practically to a stop before it collided with northbound work extra 1513.

Work extra 1513 consisted of a line car, in charge of Conductor Fore and Motorman Lindsey. When the order under which the crew was working expired at 12.10 p.m. at Benld, 10.4 miles south of Davis, the crew requested and were furnished with an order authorizing them to run extra from Benld to Moody, the latter being the first station north of Davis. This order was made complete at 12.20 p.m. and work extra 1513 departed from Benld at about 12.40 p.m., colliding with train No. 7 near Davis while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 25 and 35 miles an hour.

The open platform on the front end of the line car overrode the underframe of motor 250 and telescoped that car a distance of about 25 feet, both cars being badly damaged. The employee killed was the motorman of train No. 7.

Summary of evidence

Motorman Lindsey, of work extra 1513, said his train departed from Benld shortly after receiving running orders from Benld to Moody and that when approaching Loveless, 1.7 miles from Davis, he inquired of Conductor Fore, who was riding on the opposite side of the cabin which is built near the center of the line car, as to first train they would have to meet and he said Conductor Fore replied that it would be train No. 95, which is due at Davis at 1.49 p.m. Motorman Lindsey said he did not sound the whistle when approaching Davis, moving at a speed of 25 miles an hour, and that his first knowledge of anything wrong was when one of the two linemen who were sitting on some reels loaded on the front end of the car, called a warning and jumped. Motorman Lindsey then saw train No. 7 about 500 feet distant and placed the brake valve in service position, and when this application did not hold he placed the brake valve in the emergency position; he thought he also reversed the power but was not certain on this point. He also stated that the reason he did not see train No. 7 any sooner was because the linemen sitting on the reels cut off his view of the

track ahead. Motorman Lindsey further stated that there had been no conversation concerning train No. 7 between he and Conductor Fore at any time and acknowledged that both of them overlooked that train.

Conductor Fore said he rode on the front end of the car with the linemen, in front of the motorman, until in the vicinity of Cavender, which is 7 miles from Davis, at which point he went back into the cabin and talked with Motorman Lindsey. When near Clark, 3.5 miles from Davis, Conductor Fore looked at his timetable, while Motorman Lindsey remarked that train No. 95 was the next train they would meet, and after looking at his time-table Conductor Fore replied in the affirmative and said they would easily be able to reach Moody for that train. As the train was approaching Davis one of the linemen on the front end of the car suddenly jumped and Conductor Fore then saw train No. 7 approaching and called to the Motorman to apply the air brakes in emergency. He thought the motorman saw the approaching train at about the same time and that the brakes were applied just before the collision occurred, at which time the train was moving at a speed he estimated to have been about 25 miles an hour. Conductor Fore further stated that the motorman could not have seen the approaching train any earlier on account of the linemen sitting on the front end of the car but that he himself could have seen train No. 7 had he been looking ahead, in view of the fact that he was riding on the opposite side of the motorman's compartment and had a better view of the track ahead. He also said that there had been no conversation at any time concerning train No. 7 and that he had entirely overlooked that train.

Line Foreman Rek and Lineman Larimore were the men riding on the forward end of the car in front of the motorman. Line Foreman Rek said they were standing directly in back of the reels which were loaded on that end of the car, that they knew nothing about the orders received by the train crew and that the line car was approaching Davis at a speed of about 30 miles an hour when he saw train No. 7 rounding the curve apparently about 10 pole lengths distant, at which time he called a warning and jumped. He did not know whether or not the speed of the line car was reduced prior to the occurrence of the accident.

Groundman Lewis, who was riding in the rear of the cabin on the line car, said the speed was about 30 or 35 miles an hour when approaching Davis and that his first knowledge of danger was when he saw the motorman

start to run toward the rear of the cabin, the collision occurring immediately afterwards. Groundman Lewis had not heard any whistle signal sounded nor did he notice any reduction in speed prior to the occurrence of the accident.

The service recorder with which the line car was equipped shows at what time power is used and for how long a period. This recorder showed that power had been used continuously from about 12.41 p.m. to about 1.04 or 1.05 p.m., these times representing the time at which the line car left Benld and the time at which the accident occurred, and indicating an average speed for the distance of about 10 miles between Benld and the point of accident of between 43 and 46 miles an hour.

No statements were obtained from the crew of train No. 7, the motorman being killed and the conductor so severely injured as to be unable to make a statement.

As previously stated, the automatic block-signal system was not in working order on the day the accident occurred. It appeared that on December 18, 1924, the company had experienced a severe sleet storm, resulting in breaking down about 1,300 miles of telephone wire, while there were 67 breaks in the trolley wire and 50 instances of trouble with the high-tension transmission lines. It also appeared that out of 143 miles of automatic block-signals 121 miles were disabled, while all of the automatic highway crossing signals, such as wigwags, flashing lights, etc., were also out of service. Extra men were employed and at the time of this accident, in addition to other repair work completed, all of the block signals had been restored to service with the exception of those within the distance of 12.1 miles between Gillespie and Carlinville, within which territory this accident occurred.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Motorman Lindsey and Conductor Fore, of work extra 1513, to keep their train clear of the main track on the time of train No. 7, due to the fact that both of them overlooked that train.

Both these employees admitted overlooking train No. 7 and offered no explanation for their failure. It appears, however, that train No. 7 is due at Davis at 12.44 p.m. When Conductor Fore looked at his time-table it was about 1 p.m. and both of them apparently forgot that train No. 7 had not passed and looked at the time of the

next train after 1.p.m., which was train No. 95, due at Davis at 1.49 p.m.

Had the block signal system with which this portion of the line is equipped been in service this accident probably would not have occurred, an adequate automatic train stop or train control device would have prevented it.

The members of the crew of train No. 7 had had considerable experience. Motorman Lindsey, of work extra 1513, was employed as a brakeman in September, 1923, and qualified as a motorman in January, 1925. Conductor Fore was employed as a brakeman in 1922 and qualified as a passenger conductor in January, 1924, and as a freight conductor in July, 1924. The crew of train No. 7 had been on duty about 3 hours and the crew of work extra 1513 about 7 hours, previous to which they had been off duty periods varying from 11 to 16 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.