

April 7, 1914.

In re Investigation of Accident on the Cleveland,  
Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway at  
Riverside Yard, near Cincinnati, Ohio, on  
February 18, 1914.

On February 18, 1914, there was a head-end collision between a fast freight train and a number of freight cars occupying the main line of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway at Riverside Yard, near Cincinnati, Ohio, which resulted in the death of the engineman and head brakeman, and the injury of the fireman. The investigation of this accident was conducted jointly with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. As a result of this investigation the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

At about 9:05 p.m., February 17, a locomotive from the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway pulled a cut of 43 cars on the eastbound main track of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway, known as the Big Four 41207, the western end of this cut of cars being about 560 feet west of Riverside Tower, and 1,500 feet east of the manual block signal governing the eastbound track. It had been the intention to place these cars in the yard, but on account of there being no room for them they occupied the main track until about 10:20 p.m., at which time the Chesapeake & Ohio locomotive was cut off from the cars, under orders from the yardmaster, and returned to the tracks of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. These cars were then allowed to stand on the main track without flag protection until the time of the collision, which

occurred at about 3:22 a.m. the following morning.

Eastbound fast freight train No. 98 was en route from Indianapolis, Ind., to Mill Creek Yard, Cincinnati. It consisted of 42 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive No. 6807, and was in charge of Conductor Teagardin and Engineer Farrell. Train No. 98 left Indianapolis at 8:18 p.m., February 17, 8 hours and 23 minutes late. It passed Fernbank, Ohio, the first telegraph station west of Riverside and 7.9 miles distant therefrom, at 3:10 a.m., February 18, it then being 7 hours and 45 minutes late, and collided with the cut of cars near Riverside Tower at about 3:22 a.m. while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 35 or 40 miles per hour.

The first two cars of those occupying the main track were destroyed, while the third car was derailed and damaged. The locomotive and tender of train No. 98 were derailed and damaged considerably. The first car in this train was also derailed and was badly damaged, while the next five cars remained on the rails. The following 17 cars were derailed, many being damaged, while one was destroyed. The weather at the time of the collision was clear.

This part of the Big Four Railway is a double-track line, and trains are operated under the manual block system. At the point of accident there is no grade and the track is straight in either direction for more than 1,500 feet.

Night Yardmaster Bump, in charge of Riverside Yard at the time of the collision, stated that at the time the cut of cars was placed on the eastbound main track there was no room for

them in the yard. He understood that there were positive instructions in effect not to block the main track with cars, but said that during the period of 7 years which he had spent at Riverside Yard as switchman and yardmaster it had been the practice to block the main track whenever there was no room in the yard. These cuts of cars occupying the main track were never protected by flagmen, the only protection being afforded by the operators. He stated that the cars should have been protected, but that it was the practice not to do so and he had merely followed out this practice. He further stated that he had expected to clear the main track by 6 a.m.

Investigation as to what protection was afforded eastbound trains approaching Riverside at times when the eastbound track was blocked with cars developed the fact that if the track was to be blocked for a number of hours the dispatcher would issue orders establishing a single track zone between Riverside and Storrs. On the other hand, however, if the eastbound track was to be blocked only for a short time the dispatcher would put out an order at Storrs holding westbound trains at that point, at the same time issuing orders allowing eastbound trains to proceed against the current of traffic from Riverside to Storrs.

It further appeared that when the main line was occupied with these cuts of cars the duty of affording protection to these cars usually fell upon the operator at Storrs, 2.3 miles east of Riverside, and the operator at Riverside, principally upon the latter. The practice seems to have been for these cars to be hauled down the westbound main track until opposite -

Riverside Yard, then to be backed across to the eastbound main track and thence into the yard. When such cuts of cars passed the towers at Storrs and at Riverside, at both of which a block sheet was maintained, it was not customary to make notations on the block sheets showing such movements, and the operators did not make any in this particular case. This practice is in direct violation of rule No. 315, reading as follows:

A record must be kept at each block station of the time of arrival and departure of each train or engine, with the train number, the engine number and causes of any delays thereto; also the time each train or engine enters or clears respectively at the farther end of the block in either direction.

It further developed that the only record of these movements was kept in a transfer book which all relieving operators were required to sign. Operator McDonald, on duty at Storrs at the time of the collision, said he knew the cut of cars was occupying the eastbound main track at Riverside and that eastbound trains were therefore moving against the current of traffic, but when asked why he gave Riverside the block on the eastbound track for train No. 98 stated that he presumed that the track had been cleared, as otherwise the operator at Riverside would not have asked for the block for that train. He stated that he had been stationed at Riverside for several years and that this was the customary practice.

Operator Murray, located at Riverside, failed to sign the transfer book when he went on duty at 11.10 p.m. An examination showed that his predecessor, Operator Losey, had also failed to sign the book when he went on duty. Operator Murray had been

told, however, that there was a cut of cars from the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway on the eastbound track, and that he understood the situation is apparent from the fact that he handled two cuts of cars around the block eastbound track, using the westbound track for that purpose. He further stated that when train No. 98 whistled for the block at Riverside he was engaged in other work and he at once got up and asked the operator at Storrs for the block, and when he secured it allowed train No. 98 to enter, forgetting that the eastbound track was still occupied. His only explanation of this forgetfulness was the fact that his mind was on this extra work when train No. 98 approached. He further stated that the main track at Riverside was often blocked with cars and that the only protection afforded them was by the operator, who would be notified of their presence by the yardmaster.

Operator Losey, who was on duty at Riverside at the time the cut of cars was placed on the main line, stated that the dispatcher told him to back the cars on to the eastbound main track. The yardmaster notified him that they could not be handled in the yard and he communicated this information to the dispatcher. During his six years' experience at Riverside he had never known of these cuts of cars being afforded any protection by flagmen.

Dispatcher Shotwell, on duty from 4.00 p.m. until midnight, was notified that the eastbound track was blocked. He did not, however, issue an order notifying all trains that the westbound track would be used as a single-track line, his reason being

that he did not know how long the eastbound track would be occupied. At midnight, however, he issued an order giving an eastbound train rights over all opposing trains on the westbound track from Riverside to Storrs, so it is clear that he knew the eastbound track was still blocked. Under the rules governing the duties of train dispatchers when being relieved, it was provided that they should make a written transfer on their train order books of all outstanding train orders, and of all information relative to trains which the relieving dispatcher should know. Notwithstanding the requirements of this rule, Dispatcher Shotwell failed to show on the train order book the fact that the eastbound main track was blocked with cars from the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, but he claimed that he told Dispatcher Hopping, who relieved him, that the track was blocked. This was denied by Dispatcher Hopping, who stated that he did not know cars were occupying the main track until after the collision occurred. The night chief dispatcher also stated that he had no information that the main track was blocked.

The loose method in which trains were often handled in the vicinity of Riverside Yard was responsible for the adoption by the operators at Riverside and Storrs of a make-shift safeguard to prevent mistakes due to possible forgetfulness. This arrangement consisted of placing a railroad spike or block of wood between the latch and the handle of the levers controlling main track signals, thus preventing a hurried or improper movement. In this instance, however, Operator Murray, after lining up the switches for a train movement at 1:21 a.m., failed to "spike

the lever<sup>6</sup> controlling the eastbound signal, and when train No. 98 whistled for the block he was able to clear the signal for that train without detecting his error.

The direct cause of this accident was the action of Operator Murray in giving a false clear block signal to train No. 98.

Responsibility for the unsafe operating conditions which rendered this accident possible, however, must rest with persons much higher in authority than Operator Murray. With the eastbound running track blocked with cars, as in this case, safety required the establishment of a single track operating zone covering the blocked territory. This was the imperative duty of train dispatcher Shotwell, who should have issued the necessary instructions providing for safe train movement immediately upon being informed of the situation. Not only did Dispatcher Shotwell fail to perform his duty in this respect, but he also failed to make a proper transfer of the business of his office to the dispatcher who relieved him, as required by the rules of the company, and left the relieving dispatcher and chief dispatcher without any record of the condition of the block at Riverside.

In blocking the main track with cars, and depending entirely upon the block operator to prevent trains from running into them, Yardmaster Bump knowingly violated positive rules of the company. His only excuse for such violation was that it has been common practice to block the main line with cars, and leave them to be protected only by the block operator, during at least the seven-year period of his employment at Riverside.

Operators Lossey and Lattier, located at Riverside and Storrs, respectively, at the time the cut of cars was placed upon the main track, are open to censure for their failure to comply with rule No. 315. In this connection, however, it may be stated that it was not customary to observe the rule. Neither of these operators made any notation on his block sheet, showing when the cut of cars entered the block. Operator McDonald, on duty at Storrs at the time of the collision, failed to comply with rule No. 317 and gave a clear block to the operator at Riverside for train No. 98 when he had received no information whatever that the block was clear.

Many accidents previously investigated have been due directly or indirectly to the failure of employees properly to observe the rules laid down for their guidance by the railroad company, and in many of these investigations it has been shown that such violations of the rules were common occurrences. The accident here under investigation is a typical illustration of the manner in which the rules are often flagrantly disregarded, the intention of the night yard master to leave the cars on the eastbound main line from 9:05 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. without arranging for proper protection being an example of the dangerous situations which are thus created. The existence of such a condition is a menace to all who travel upon railroads and can



only be the result of one of two causes - either those in authority do not exercise that degree of supervision which should prevail at all times and under all conditions, and consequently are ignorant of the fact that the rules are being violated, or such violations are allowed to continue undiscovered or unchecked. Responsibility for seeing that employees understand and obey the rules and regulations is a duty incumbent upon the officials and accidents will continue to occur as long as they, as well as the employees, fail properly to perform their duties.