

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2510
THE WABASH RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR NEELY3, ILL., ON
JUNE 28, 1941

SUMMARY

Railroad: Wabash

Date: June 28, 1941

Location: Neelys, Ill.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Extra 2277 East : Extra 2711 West

Engine numbers: 2277 : 2711

Consist: 60 cars, caboose : 99 cars, caboose

Speed: 15-18 m. p. h. : 30 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders and manual-block system for following movements only

Track: Single; 2°30' curve; 0.691 percent ascending grade eastward

Weather: Clear

Time: About 5 a. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure to obey a meet order

Recommendation: That the Wabash Railway Company establish an adequate block signal system on its Decatur Division, 10th District, and submit to this Commission for approval rules and instructions for the proper maintenance and operation of such block signal system.

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2510

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE WABASH RAILWAY COMPANY

August 23, 1941.

Accident Near Neelys, Ill., on June 28, 1941, caused by failure
to obey a meet order.

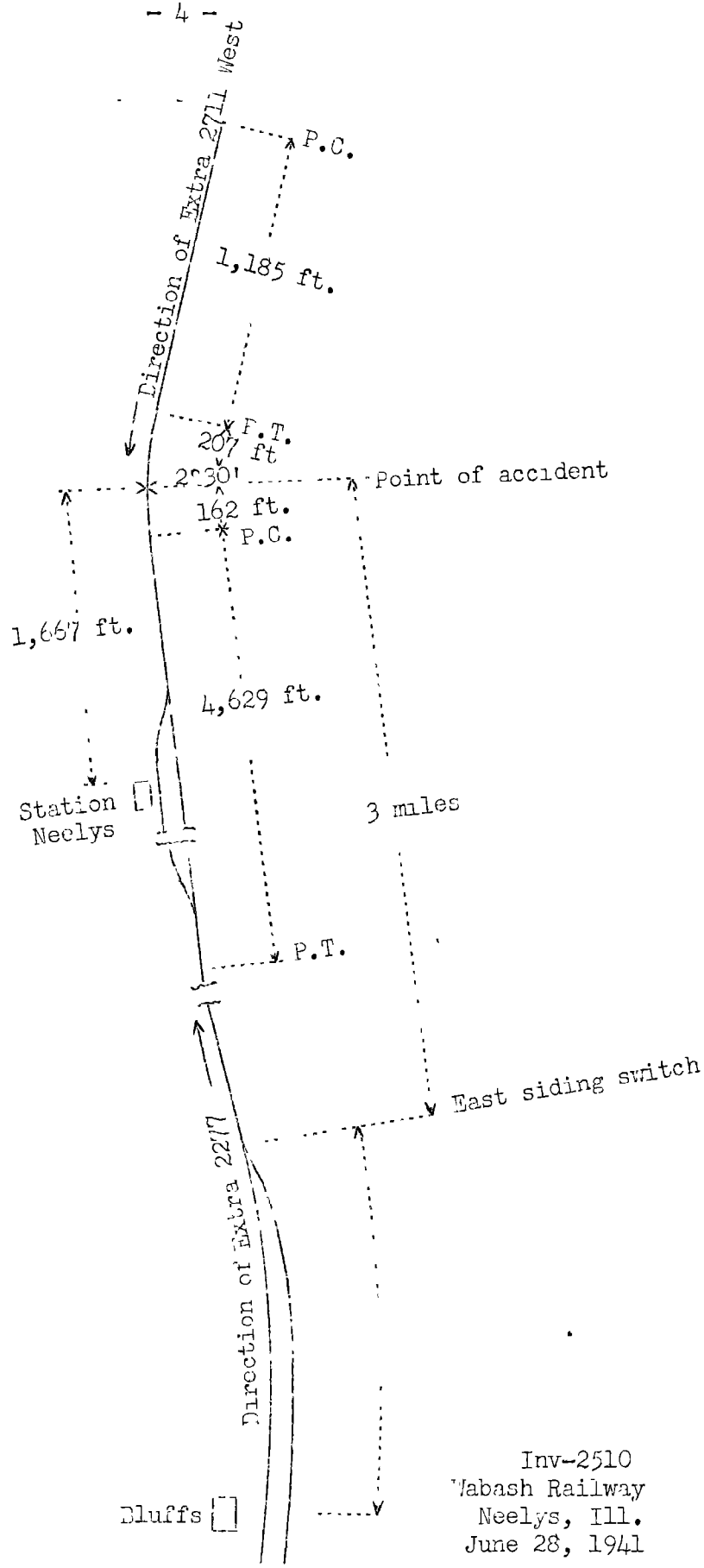
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 28, 1941, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Wabash Railway near Neelys, Ill., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of three employees. The investigation of this accident was made in conjunction with a representative of the Illinois Commerce Commission.

¹

Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



- o Decatur, Ill.
39.1 mi.
- o Shops
33.2 mi.
- o Jacksonville
10.0 mi.
- o Chapin
4.0 mi.
- X Point of accident
0.2 mi.
- o Neelys, Ill.
3.3 mi.
- o Bluffs
50.3 mi.
- o Hannibal, Mo.
2.1 mi.
- o Outer Depot, Mo.

Inv-2510
Wabash Railway
Neelys, Ill.
June 28, 1941

Location and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Decatur Division designated as the 10th District, which extends between Decatur, Ill., and Outer Depot, Mo., a distance of 142.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and a manual-block system for following movements only. At Bluffs a siding about 6,500 feet in length parallels the main track on the south; the east switch of this siding is 3,679.5 feet east of the station. The accident occurred at a point about 3 miles east of the east siding-switch at Bluffs and 1,667 feet east of the station at Neelys. As the point of accident is approached from the west there is a tangent 4,629 feet in length, which is followed by a 2°30' curve to the right 162 feet to the point of accident and 207 feet beyond. As the point of accident is approached from the east there is a series of short curves and tangents followed, in succession, by a 2°30' curve to the right 485 feet in length, a tangent 1,693 feet, a 0°15' curve to the right 464 feet in length, a tangent 1,185 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for west-bound trains is 0.691 percent descending a distance of more than 1 mile to the point of accident. The grade for east-bound trains is 0.553 percent ascending 4,000 feet, and then 0.691 percent ascending 1,300 feet to the point of accident.

Rules and Regulations of the Transportation Department read in whole or in part as follows:

S-88. At meeting points between extra trains, the train in the inferior time-table direction must take the siding unless otherwise provided.

* * *

S-89 (a). * * *

At train order meeting points, the train holding the main track must stop clear of the switch used by the train to be met in going on siding, unless the train to be met is clear of the main track and switch is properly lined.

S-90. * * *

* * *, the engineman will give signal 14 (n) at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point. Should enginemen fail to give this signal or fail to prepare to stop short of fouling point, when required, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

S-208. A train order to be sent to two or more offices must be transmitted simultaneously to as many of them as practicable. When not sent simultaneously to all, the order must be sent first to the superior train.

The several addresses must be in the order of superiority of trains, each office taking its proper address, and, when practicable, must include the operator at the meeting or waiting point.

Copies of the order addressed to the operator at the meeting or waiting point must be delivered to the trains affected until all have arrived from one direction.

* * *

221 (d). A train must receive a clearance before leaving a station where train orders are delivered to it. The conductor, engineman and rear trainman of each train must see that the clearance is properly addressed to their train, and that they receive all the train orders which the clearance indicates they are to receive.

The operator must write on the clearance the numbers of all orders he has for the train addressed, and before delivering the clearance to the train he must repeat the numbers of the orders from the clearance to the train dispatcher, thus: "Clear No. _____ with Orders Nos. _____." The train dispatcher must write the train and order numbers in his train order book as they are repeated from the clearance by the operator, and if the correct order numbers have been given he will reply: "Orders Nos. _____ O.K. to _____ (Train Number) _____ at _____ (Time) _____ M."

Operators must not issue a clearance to a train unless it has been "OK'd" by the train dispatcher, except in case of failure of means of communication, and not then to an extra train at its initial station.

General Order No. 1, dated January 1, 1941, reads in part as follows:

Effective 12:01 a. m. date, the following trailing block rules will govern the movement of trains on the 10th District:

TRAILING BLOCK: A series of consecutive blocks, governed by block signals operated manually, upon information by telegraph, telephone or other means of communication.

* * *

1. Block signals govern the use of the blocks, but unless otherwise provided, do not supersede the superiority of trains; nor dispense with the use or the observance of other signals whenever and wherever they may be required.

4. Each block station will be provided with register sheets, upon which signalmen will record (commencing at midnight daily), arriving, clearing and leaving time of all trains at his own station, leaving time of all trains at adjoining station in rear, and clearing time of all trains at adjoining station in advance.

7. When signal is at Stop indication and signalman issues clearance, Form 441, stating that block is clear, the train receiving this clearance may proceed if its time-table superiority or train orders, permit it to do so. If block is not clear, caution card, Form 442 (In addition to clearance) is necessary.

8. When trains are to meet at a block station signalmen will block all such trains until certain that all opposing trains to be met at that station have arrived, when he will permit them to proceed with clearance, if block is clear.

* * *

Time-table general instructions provide as follows:

Eastward trains are superior to westward trains of the same class. * * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for the trains involved is 30 miles per hour.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5 a. m.

Description

Extra 2277 East, an east-bound freight train, with Conductor Fuson and Engineman Hill in charge, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 2277, 20 loaded and 40 empty cars and a caboose. At Outer Depot, 52.4 miles west of Bluffs, the crew received, among others, copies of train order No. 12, Form 19, which read as follows:

Extra 2277 East meet Extra 2711
West at Bluffs.

The order was made complete at 1:19 a. m. This train departed from Outer Depot at 1:30 a.m., according to the train sheet, and arrived at Bluffs, 3.3 miles west of Neelys, at 4:30 a. m. After cars were added to the train and a supply of coal was taken, the crew received a clearance, Form 441, which was issued at 4:32 a. m. and contained information that the block was clear and that order No. 23, Form 19, was being delivered to the crew at that station. Order No. 23 specified a series of waiting times for First 21. Extra 2277 departed from Bluffs at 4:47 a. m., passed the east siding-switch where it was required to stop on the main track west of the fouling point to meet Extra 2711 West, and, at a point 1,667 feet east of the station at Neelys and while moving at a speed variously estimated as 15 or 18 miles per hour, it collided with Extra 2711 West.

Extra 2711 West, a west-bound freight train, with Conductor Clark and Engineman Schultz in charge, consisted at the time of the accident of engine 2711, 13 loaded and 86 empty cars and a caboose. At Shops, 47.4 miles east of Neelys, the crew received copies of train order No. 12, Form 19, previously quoted. This train left Shops at 2:55 a. m., according to the train sheet, passed Chapin, 4.2 miles east of Neelys and the last open office, at 4:53 a. m., and, while moving at a speed estimated as 30 miles per hour, collided with Extra 2277 East.

The driving wheels and the rear tender-truck of engine 2277 were derailed. The engine truck was forced back under the first pair of driving wheels and the smokebox was crushed. The pilot, the front-end engine frame and both cylinders were broken off. The first car was derailed to the right and was badly damaged. The smokebox and the cab of engine 2711 were demolished. The pilot, the front-end engine frame and both cylinders were broken off and the engine truck was detached. The tender cistern was demolished. The first fourteen cars of Extra 2711 were derailed and stopped in various positions, badly damaged, on either side of the track. Fourteen car-trucks were grouped together at the rear of the tender. The wreckage was contained within a distance of 300 feet.

The employees killed were the engineman and the fireman of Extra 2711 West. The employees injured were the front brakeman of Extra 2711 West, and the engineman and the front brakeman of Extra 2277 East.

Summary of Evidence

Engineman Hill, of Extra 2277 East, stated that at Outer Depot a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly en route. At Outer Depot the conductor delivered to him, among others, train order No. 12. The engineman under-

stood that his train was required to stop clear of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Bluffs unless Extra 2711 West was in the clear on the siding. As his train was approaching Bluffs he sounded the meeting-point whistle signal. About 1-1/2 miles west of Bluffs four members of the crew who were on the engine discussed the provisions of order No. 12. Near the west end of the siding at Bluffs the front brakeman remarked that Extra 2711 was not in the clear. The engineman said that his train stopped at Bluffs at 4:30 a. m., 12 cars were added to the train and a supply of coal was taken. The flagman delivered a copy of train order No. 23 directing First 91 to wait at four designated places for Extra 2277 East, together with a clearance, Form 441, containing information that the order delivered was No. 23 and that the block was clear, and a message directing his train to perform work at Chapin. His train started at 4:42 a. m., and the engine passed the station about 4:44 a. m. The train-order signal displayed a red aspect. His train passed the east siding-switch where it was required to stop clear of the fouling point and he failed to observe whether Extra 2711 West was in the clear. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour. The first he knew of anything being wrong was when he saw the headlight of Extra 2711 a short distance away. He immediately applied the brakes and jumped off. The collision occurred immediately afterward. He could not explain his failure to comply with the requirements of the meet order; however, he was concentrating on the time available for his train to proceed against First 91 as specified in order No. 23, and he thought this might have been a contributory factor in his forgetting the meeting point with Extra 2711. He understood the bulletin rules applicable to following movements within a block. Since these rules provide that when trains are to meet at an open station all opposing trains must arrive at that station before a clearance is delivered, it was his opinion that if the operator at Bluffs had not delivered a clearance before Extra 2711 arrived at Bluffs, he would not have failed to comply with order No. 12; furthermore, if a copy of the middle order had been delivered at Bluffs it would have reminded him of the meeting point with Extra 2711. He was promoted to engineman in 1911 and all service has been performed on the 10th District. He was last examined on operating rules in December, 1940.

Fireman Opel, of Extra 2277 East, stated that he read train order No. 12 and understood that his train was required to stop on the main track at Bluffs clear of the fouling point of the east siding-switch unless Extra 2711 West was in the clear on the siding. As his train was approaching Bluffs the engineman sounded the meeting-point whistle signal. As the train passed the west siding-switch the engineman remarked that the train to be met had not arrived. The fireman said that after cars were

added to the train and a supply of coal was taken the flagman delivered to the engineman a copy of order No. 23 and a clearance which contained information that the block was clear. His train passed the train-order signal, which displayed stop; however, such movements are permitted after a clearance is delivered to a train. His train passed the east siding-switch and proceeded eastward. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 or 18 miles per hour. The first he knew of anything being wrong was when the engineman called a warning that a collision was imminent. The fireman said that he forgot about the order to meet Extra 2711 at Bluffs and thus failed to remind his engineman concerning the meeting point. He could not explain his failure to remember the meeting point unless it was because of concentrating on the time available for his train to proceed against First 91. He has performed service on the 10th District during 34 years past and was promoted to engineman in 1923. He is familiar with the operation of the block system for following movements only. He understood that a clearance card or a caution card indicates block occupancy for following movements but that block information concerning opposing trains is not required. When trains are to meet at a station the signalman should hold all trains in one direction until all opposing trains involved in the meeting order have arrived before he issues a clearance or displays the train-order signal at proceed. When a train receives a clearance containing information that the block is clear, it may proceed if its time-table superiority or train orders permit.

Front Brakeman Ferguson, of Extra 2277 East, stated that he read train order No. 12. The engineman, the fireman and he discussed its provisions and understood that their train was required to stop clear of the fouling point at the east siding-switch at Bluffs unless Extra 2711 West was in the clear on the siding. As his train was approaching Bluffs the engineman sounded the meeting-point whistle signal. When his train was ready to depart he read order No. 23, which was received at Bluffs. This order specified four points at which First 91 would wait. Because he was reading the order, the clearance and a list of cars to be added to the train at Chapin, he failed to remember the meeting point with Extra 2711. He did not hear any other member of the crew on the engine again discuss the provisions of the meet order. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 or 20 miles per hour. The first he knew of anything being wrong was when the engineman called a warning and then the accident occurred. The front brakeman was familiar with the operation of the block system for following movements only. He understood that the clearance received at Bluffs specified that the block was clear of preceding movements but it did not give information concerning opposing trains in the block. When a train receives a clearance, Form 441, it may proceed past a train-order signal displaying stop if time-table superiority or train orders

permit. In his opinion, if a copy of the middle order had been delivered at Bluffs, it would have reminded the crew about the meeting point with Extra 2711 and the accident might have been averted. About 19 minutes elapsed from the time the engineman sounded the meeting-point whistle signal to the time the train departed from Bluffs.

Flagman Fraser, of Extra 2277 East, stated that he read train order No. 12 and understood that his train was required to stop clear of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Bluffs unless Extra 2711 West was in the clear on the siding. As his train was approaching Bluffs the engineman sounded the meeting-point whistle signal. At Bluffs after 12 cars were added to the train the brake of each car added functioned properly. He delivered an order to the engineman, together with a clearance which contained information that the block was clear. The flagman was on the engine when the train departed from Bluffs. He said that his train passed the east siding-switch and no member of the crew on the engine mentioned that Extra 2711 had not arrived. The flagman could not explain his failure to remember the provisions of the meet order. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour and visibility was unrestricted. The first he knew of anything being wrong was when the engineman called a warning. At that time Extra 2711 was about 200 feet distant. He said that no unusual incident occurred to distract the attention of any member of the crew from the requirements of order No. 12. When the train was leaving Bluffs there was a discussion among members of the crew on the engine concerning work to be performed at Chapin. The flagman was last examined on operating rules on December 12, 1940. He was familiar with the block system for following movements only, and he said that when a clearance card or a caution card is issued or the train-order signal displays proceed, the information is for track occupancy by preceding trains but not for opposing trains. In his opinion, if a copy of order No. 12 had been delivered at Bluffs in compliance with the rules governing the issuance of a middle order, this accident could have been averted.

Conductor Fuson, of Extra 2277, stated that at Outer Depot a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly. Before his train departed from that point he received, among others, a copy of order No. 12 and understood that his train was required to stop clear of the fouling point of the east siding-switch at Bluffs unless Extra 2711 was in the clear. He delivered a copy of order No. 12 to his engineman, who read it in the conductor's presence. The order was clear and legible. The conductor said that his train stopped west of the station at Bluffs at 4:30 a. m. While cars were being added to the train he inspected that portion of the train which was on the main track.

His train started at 4:42 a. m. and he boarded the caboose. The caboose passed the train-order signal, which displayed a red aspect, at 4:47 a. m. The operator delivered train order No. 23, a clearance bearing information that the block was clear, a message concerning work to be performed en route, and bills for the cars that were added at Bluffs. After the caboose passed the station the conductor gave a proceed lantern-signal. His train failed to stop clear of the east siding-switch and proceeded eastward. He could not explain his failure to remember that his train and Extra 2711 were to meet at Bluffs, except that he was occupied in checking the bills and in entering information on the wheel report. Had his train stopped clear of the east siding-switch the caboose would have stopped about 20 car lengths east of the station. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 15 miles per hour. He thought the accident occurred about 4:55 a. m. He was last examined on operating rules on December 12, 1940. He was familiar with the block system in use, and he said clearance, Form 441, indicates the block condition for following movements only. He understood that when a train-order signal displays stop, and a clearance, Form 441, indicating a clear block is received, a train may proceed if its superiority or train orders permit. He said that in some instances a middle order is received at the meeting or waiting point. If a copy of order No. 12 had been delivered at Bluffs, his attention would have again been directed to the meeting point with Extra 2711 and the accident could have been averted.

Front Brakeman Dickens, of Extra 2711, stated that the air brakes were tested at Decatur and functioned properly en route. He read order No. 12 and understood that his train was required to enter the siding at Bluffs and meet Extra 2277. The train-order signal at Chapin displayed proceed for his train. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 30 miles per hour and he was digging down coal. The engineman and the fireman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The first that the front brakeman knew of anything being wrong was when the fireman called a warning. The engineman immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position but too late to avert the collision. Visibility was good, the weather was clear, and day was just breaking at the time of the accident.

Conductor Clark, of Extra 2711, stated that at Decatur a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly en route. At Shops he received order No. 12. He understood that his train was to enter the east siding-switch at Bluffs to meet Extra 2277. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 30 miles per hour and he was in the caboose cupola. The first he knew of anything being wrong was when the air brakes were applied in emergency and the train stopped abruptly. He is familiar with the trailing-block system in use. He said that under this system

clearance cards and train-order signals convey information of block conditions for trains in the same direction only, and opposing trains move with respect to time-table superiority or train orders. He did not think it necessary for the operator at Bluffs to report to the dispatcher that an east-bound train had passed the train-order signal to proceed to the east siding-switch, as it is customary at Bluffs for an east-bound train to proceed to the fouling point of the east switch for a west-bound train that is required to enter the siding. He said that it is customary to receive a copy of the middle order at a meeting point.

The statement of Flagman Hudson, of Extra 2711, added nothing of importance.

Telegrapher Sorenson, at Bluffs, stated that Extra 2277 East arrived at Bluffs at 4:50 a. m. He delivered copies of order No. 23 to the flagman, specifying that First 91 would wait at designated points, together with a clearance bearing information that the block was clear of preceding trains, and a message instructing Extra 2277 to perform work at Chapin. Extra 2277 proceeded eastward and the caboose passed the station at 4:47 a. m. The operator delivered copies of the order, the message, and the clearance to the conductor, who was on the caboose. The operator had overheard some member of the crew mention that Extras 2277 and 2711 were to meet at Bluffs; therefore, he thought that Extra 2277 was proceeding to the east siding-switch and would stop clear of the fouling point until Extra 2711 was into clear. Some time prior to the arrival of Extra 2277 the dispatcher had informed him that Extras 2277 and 2711 would meet at Bluffs but the dispatcher did not issue a middle order addressed to the operator and the operator did not remind him. The operator said that between 11 p. m. and the time that Extra 2277 arrived he was available practically all the time for copying train orders. He understood that the block system was for following movements only. Since the block between Bluffs and Chapin was clear of preceding movements he filled out a clearance, Form 441, addressed to Extra 2277, showing the number of the order delivered and information that the block was clear. Under the trailing-block system, opposing trains may proceed and meet according to time-table superiority or as train orders specify. He understood that when trains meet at an open station the signalman must hold the designated train until all opposing trains that are to meet it at that station have arrived; however, in this instance the operator did not have a copy of a middle order requiring him to hold Extra 2277. He did not report that Extra 2277 had departed because he expected that train to proceed only to the fouling point of the east siding-switch. Because of track curvature and the distance between the station and the east siding-switch the caboose of a train of the length of Extra 2277 would be out of the sight of the operator at the station when the engine stopped at the east siding-switch. For this reason he was unaware that Extra 2277

had departed from Bluffs. He reported to the dispatcher that Extra 2277 was clear of the block to the rear of Bluffs at 4:47 a. m. Clearance cards are issued only by the authority of the dispatcher.

Dispatcher Lowary stated that he issued order No. 12 simultaneously to Extra 2277 East at Outer Depot and Extra 2711 West at Shops, and made it complete at 1:19 a. m. Because the operator at Bluffs did not respond, he did not issue a middle order addressed to the operator at Bluffs. The dispatcher said that it is customary to issue a middle order to the operator at a meeting point. In this instance he rang the operator at Bluffs several times but he thought the operator was delivering orders to a train that left Bluffs at 1:20 a. m. The dispatcher intended to transmit order No. 12 to the operator at Bluffs as soon as possible, but because of being occupied in issuing orders necessary to expedite the movement of other trains he forgot to do so. Later, when he transmitted order No. 23 to Bluffs addressed to Extra 2277 East and which specified waiting points for First 91, he was under the impression that he had issued a middle order to the operator at Bluffs. Between 4:25 and 4:30 a. m. the operator at Bluffs requested information as to where Extras 2277 and 2711 were to meet. The dispatcher informed the operator that the meeting point was Bluffs and that Extra 2711 was by Jacksonville, 17.5 miles east of Bluffs, at 4:25 a. m. After Extra 2277 arrived at Bluffs the operator asked him if there were more orders for Extra 2277 and the dispatcher replied in the negative. When the dispatcher authorized a clearance for Extra 2277 at 4:32 a. m. he was still under the impression that he had transmitted order No. 12 to the operator at Bluffs although he did not authorize the operator to include order No. 12 with order No. 23 on the clearance. The dispatcher said that he is familiar with general order No. 1, which specifies that the block system on the Tenth District is for following movements only. When a clearance, Form 441, is issued to a train, it contains information of block conditions affecting the movement of trains in the same direction. When a clearance bears information that the block is clear, trains may proceed if time-table superiority or train orders permit. The rules do not require clearance cards to contain information relative to opposing trains. The operator at Bluffs did not report the departing time of Extra 2277. About 5:20 a. m. the operator at Chapin reported that Extra 2711 had passed Chapin at 4:53 a. m. and that Extra 2277 had departed from Bluffs at 4:47 a. m. The dispatcher said that had he issued a middle order at Bluffs it would have served as a reminder to the crew of Extra 2277 East.

Superintendent Johnston stated that a block system for following movements only has been in effect on the 10th District since 1908. This system is designated as a trailing block system and the rules governing its operation are contained in a bulletin which is reissued each year. The present rules are contained in

General Order No. 1, which was issued January 1, 1941. Although the present rules and regulations of the transportation department contain manual-block rules, which provide that opposing trains must not occupy a block at the same time, these rules are not in effect on the 10th District. The manual-block rules are put in effect by time-table general instruction and the current timetable does not provide that manual block rules are in effect on the 10th District. When general orders are issued, each employee concerned is given a copy and copies are posted at each bulletin station. Because of the method of issuing the rules applicable to the trailing-block system, it is his opinion that all employees are thoroughly familiar with its operation.

The station record of train movements at Baylis, the block station west of Bluffs, and at Bluffs disclose that Extra 2277 cleared the block between Baylis and Bluffs at 4:47 a. m., but the record at Bluffs does not indicate that Extra 2277 departed from that station. The station record of train movements at Chapin, the block station east of Bluffs, does not disclose that Extra 2277 entered the latter block.

During the 32-day period prior to the occurrence of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 12.09 trains.

Discussion

According to the evidence, the crews of Extra 2277 East and Extra 2711 West held copies of a train order requiring that these trains meet at Bluffs. According to the rules, since Extra 2711 West was moving in the inferior time-table direction and since the order did not specify that Extra 2277 East would take siding, Extra 2277 East was required not to pass the fouling point at the east siding-switch at Bluffs until Extra 2711 West was in the clear at that station. The crews of both trains understood these requirements. Extra 2277 East stopped at Bluffs at 4:30 a. m., to add cars to its train and to take a supply of coal, and departed about 4:47 a. m. Instead of stopping with the front of the train west of the clearance point at the east siding-switch, located 3,680 feet east of the station, this train continued eastward and collided with Extra 2711 West at a point about 3 miles east of the east siding-switch.

The five members of the crew of Extra 2277 East said they forgot about the train order requiring that their train meet Extra 2711 West at Bluffs. All members except the conductor were on the engine when the train approached Bluffs and also when it departed from that station. As the train was approaching Bluffs the four members on the engine discussed the meeting point between their train and Extra 2711 West. This discussion occurred about 20 minutes before Extra 2277 East passed the east

siding-switch. Since the crew received at Bluffs a message concerning work to be done en route and a train order specifying a series of waiting times for First 91, the four members on the engine said they were engrossed in planning the movement of their train and forgot about the meeting point involved. The conductor was engaged in entering on the wheel report information concerning the cars added to his train at Bluffs and for that reason forgot about the meeting point. All members of the crew were of the opinion that if they had received copies of a middle order at Bluffs, they would have been reminded of the meeting point and the accident would have been averted.

The rules require that when practicable a copy of a meet order or a wait order shall be addressed to the operator at the meeting or waiting point. When the dispatcher involved was issuing the meet order he received no response from the operator at Bluffs. Thereafter the dispatcher was engaged in handling several other movements and more than 3 hours later when he was conversing with the operator at Bluffs concerning the clearance about to be delivered to Extra 2277 East the dispatcher was under the impression that he had issued a middle order to the operator. During this conversation the dispatcher informed the operator that the trains involved were to meet at Bluffs but the operator did not remind the dispatcher that a middle order had not been issued. The operator delivered a clearance which indicated that only the order pertaining to the movement of First 91 was being delivered to the crew of the east-bound train at Bluffs. If the operator had received a middle order concerning the meeting point he would be required to deliver copies of the order to the crew of the east-bound train and to hold it at his train-order signal until the west-bound train was in the clear. The operator thought Extra 2277 would stop short of the east siding-switch and did not know until after the accident occurred that this train had failed to do so, because the east switch was a considerable distance from the station and track curvature prevented the operator from seeing any part of the train after the caboose was a short distance east of the station. If a middle order had been delivered to this train immediately before it departed from the station undoubtedly the crew would have been reminded about the meet order and it is probable the accident would have been averted; however, four members had the meet order in mind about 20 minutes before the train passed beyond the fouling point.

The block system in use on the line involved is for following movements only. The book of operating rules of this railroad contains manual-block rules which provide for the blocking of opposing movements as well as following movements but these rules are not in effect on the territory involved. If these rules had been in effect, the operator would have been required to hold Extra 2277 East at the block signal until after Extra 2711 West had cleared the block and he had arranged with the operator at

the first office east of Bluffs for block authority for the east-bound train, and thereby the accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Wabash Railway Company establish an adequate block signal system on its Decatur Division, 10th District, and submit to this Commission for approval rules and instructions for the proper maintenance and operation of such block signal system.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-third day of August, 1941.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.