

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY CONCERNING AN
ACCIDENT OF THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY
AT DOYLE, KY., ON AUGUST 27, 1932.

October 10, 1932.

To the Commission:

On August 27, 1932, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Doyle, Ky., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred within the yard limits at Doyle, located on that part of the Evansville Division which extends between Louisville, Ky., and Evansville, Ind., a distance of 155.4 miles. In the immediate vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The yard at Doyle parallels the main track on the east side, the north end of the yard being about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the station at Owensboro, Ky., and the yard office and coal chute are located at that end of the yard. Yard track 1 is used as a passing track. There is also one track on the west side of the main track, this track being used as a storage track. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 4,739 feet north of the south yard-limit board and about one-half mile south of the yard office, approaching this point from the south, the track is tangent for a distance of approximately 2 miles, this tangent extending for a considerable distance beyond the point of accident. The grade is practically level.

It was partly cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9.25 p.m.

Description

Extra 1341, in charge of Conductor Hinton and Engineman Stenell, was ordered to leave Owensboro at 8.15 p.m., and at the time of the accident the crew was engaged in making up the train in Doyle yard. After picking up 13 cars on the storage track the cars were coupled to the caboose, which was standing on the main track, and then pushed back about 25 car-lengths on the main track. The engine was then moved to yard track 4 in order to pick up more cars, and was so engaged when the rear end of the train, which had been standing on the main track about 20 minutes, was struck by extra 1307.

Northbound freight train extra 1307 consisted of 24 cars and a caboose, 1,527 tons, hauled by engine 1307, and was in charge of Conductor Bauer and Engineman Whitenhouse. This train passed Cloverport, 37.5 miles south of Doyle, at 8.21 p.m., according to the train sheet, and collided with the rear end of extra 1341 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 20 miles per hour.

The caboose of extra 1341 was practically demolished, and the four cars immediately ahead of it were derailed and more or less damaged, the fifth car from the caboose was partly derailed. Engine 1307 was derailed to the left, traveled a distance of about 225 feet, and came to rest at about a 45° angle to the main track with its front end on the storage track and leaning on the left. With the exception of the tender and one truck of the first car, none of the other equipment in this train was derailed.

The employee killed was the brakeman of extra 1307 and the employee injured was the fireman of the same train.

Summary of evidence.

Engineman Whitenhouse, of extra 1307, stated that the brakes had been tested and that he had experienced no difficulties in making stops or otherwise braking the train from South Louisville to the point of accident, a distance of about 109 miles, and the train had the average braking power for a short heavy train. When he passed the yard-limit board, moving at a speed of about 20 miles per hour, he had a clear view and could see the yard office semaphore clearly. He closed the throttle at that time, with the intention of stopping at the yard office, as he thought the main track was clear, and shortly afterwards he made a 10 or 15-pound brake-pipe reduction, when about 35 car-lengths from where the accident afterwards occurred. The brake valve was in holding position, and he was about 7 or 8 car-lengths from the caboose when he first noticed it, he at once moved the brake-valve handle to the emergency position, reversed the engine, and opened the sanders. Engineman Whitenhouse stated that he had been looking out continuously after entering the yard limits, and that his headlight was burning and gave a good light, and the reason he did not see the caboose sooner was because the markers on the caboose were very dim. He also stated that he was familiar with the bulletin instructions in effect at Doyle and certain other yards, authorizing second class and inferior trains to occupy the main track on the time of other second class and inferior trains without protection.

Fireman Burke, of extra 1307, stated that he was cleaning the deck of the engine when the train passed the yard-limit board at a speed of about 30 miles per hour. He heard an application of the brakes, and noticing that the brakeman had left the left side of the cab, he got up to look out, and at that time he noticed the dim markers on the caboose, about 35 car-lengths distant, the

speed still was about 35 miles per hour and he then warned the engineman by calling "Caboose down there" and about that time the brakes were applied in emergency. Fireman Burke stated that at this time the brakeman was standing on the deck on the right side, and then moved over and began looking out from the gangway on the right side. The fireman did not pay any further attention to the operation of the train until the brakeman called "There they are", and on looking through the front window on the right side of the cab he realized that a collision was imminent. Fireman Burke further stated that the train was operated into Doyle yard at a higher rate of speed than is customary, however he did not think it was his duty to call the engineman's attention to the matter as he considered the engineman was familiar with the rules and special instructions, and he also stated that when he first saw the caboose markers they were very dim and at that time he thought the caboose was about 65 car-lengths distant, afterwards he realized it was hazy weather which caused the markers to appear dimly when he first saw them.

Conductor Bauer, of extra 1307, stated that just before arriving at Doyle he climbed down from the cupola of the caboose for the purpose of writing a message, he felt the brakes go into emergency and the speed was reduced from 35 miles per hour to about 20 miles per hour and then the train came to a sudden stop. Up to this time there had not been anything unusual in the handling of the train.

The statements of Flagman Taylor brought out nothing additional of importance, and he agreed that the speed was 35 miles per hour when entering the yard.

Car Inspector Brown, who was only a few car-lengths away when the collision occurred, had seen the train coming when it was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant, but when he realized that it was not going to stop in time to avoid a collision it was too late to do any flagging. He did not think the train was being operated into Doyle yard at an unusual rate of speed.

Conductor Hinton, of extra 1341, stated that he and his crew were engaged in making up their train and after picking up 13 cars from the storage track they coupled the cars to the caboose and pushed them down the main track about 25 car-lengths, where they were left with the brakes set. The crew then moved over to track 4 in the yard, and after picking up some cars they were pulling out of the yard when they were signalled to stop, Conductor Hinton walked back to ascertain the trouble and was informed of the accident. He further stated that the rear end of his train had been standing on the main track about 15 or 20 minutes. The statements of Engineman Stengell, Fireman Sears, Brakeman Brown and Flagman Marion, all of extra 1341, added nothing of importance, except that Flagman Marion said the markers on his caboose were unusually good, and that they were burning properly when he saw them 5 or 10 minutes prior to the accident.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Whitehouse, of extra 1307, to operate his train under control within yard limits.

Bulletin No. 367, issued May 13, 1932, contained the following instructions

Second class and inferior trains and switch engines, switching or working between yard limit boards at Irvington, Doyle, Henderson, Hopkinsville and Guthrie, will be allowed to do so against the time of second class and inferior trains that have not arrived without protecting their trains in accordance with the rules. Second class and inferior trains approaching these yard limits from either direction must approach the yard limit boards prepared to stop, and must proceed through the yard between the yard limit boards expecting to find second class and inferior trains and yard engines using the main track and switching without protection.

While the evidence was conflicting in some of its details, it is apparent that Engineman Whitehouse was operating his train into Doyle at too high a rate of speed and that no material reduction in speed was made until the caboose of extra 1341 was seen a short distance away, when an emergency application of the brakes was made, too late to avert the accident. Engineman Whitehouse was handling a short heavy train, and in view of the bulletin instructions above quoted, he should have been particularly careful to have his train under full control when entering these yard limits.

The evidence also is conflicting as to the exact condition of the markers on the caboose of extra 1341. The flagman said they were burning well when he last saw them, while those on the engine of extra 1307 said they were burning dimly, although the fireman thought that hazy weather might have accounted for this condition. Under the bulletin instructions, however, the condition of these markers did not relieve Engineman Whitehouse of the necessity of operating his train prepared to stop.

All of the employees involved were experienced men, although Engineman Whitehouse was making his second trip as an engineman since April 14, 1932, none of these men had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.