

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON
THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD AT ELKHART, IND., ON
MAY 7, 1921.

May 24, 1921.

On May 7, 1921, there was a collision between a yard engine pushing an empty box car and a cut of standing cars in the yard of the New York Central Railroad at Elkhart, Ind., which resulted in the death of 2 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

Description.

Yard engine 4456, headed east, in charge of Conductor Wineland and Engineman Kinnison, backed in and coupled to an empty box car standing on track 3, intending to take it to the Sidway Plant for loading. After coupling to the car it started eastward, moved about 900 feet and stopped to clear the switch of a track known as the new shop lead, leading to the south. The switch was thrown and the engine pushing the car behind the tender then started westward on the new shop lead and had proceeded a distance of about 1,200 feet when, while moving at a speed of 6 or 8 miles per hour, it collided with a string of six cars standing on that track. The accident occurred at 3:53 a.m., day was breaking and the weather was clear.

The box car being pushed by engine 4456 had its end sill broken in two, its center sills and draft timbers broken on the end next to the engine, and the end of this car was raised up over the end sill of the tender. Engine 4456 was slightly damaged. The employees killed were the

conductor and brakeman, who were riding on the foot board of the tender, on the enginemen's side.

Summary of evidence.

When engine 4456 picked up the box car on track 3 and started eastward, Brakeman Clement went across the tracks and lined up the switches for the movement of his engine to the Sidway Plant. Engineman Kinnison stated that he knew Conductor Wineland and Brakeman Smith were standing on the foot board of the engine tender, that he was traveling westward in backward motion with the box car west of the engine and was moving at a speed of 5 or 6 miles an hour and was looking out watching for signals. As he entered upon the new shop lead he received a signal to give the car a little kick, and he said the engine had exhausted about three times when he saw one of the men put out his arm as an "easy" signal; the collision occurred almost immediately afterwards. The engineman and fireman both said it was impossible for them to see around the box car ahead and they were relying on the men on the foot board to know that the way was clear.

Investigation developed that the six cars on the new shop lead had been placed there by the second trick crew before the crew involved in the accident came on duty; that it was customary to leave cars on this lead, and that no instructions have been issued that this lead must be kept clear. Each member of the crew involved in the accident had worked in this vicinity for a considerable

length of time and knew thoroughly the conditions and customs of the work in this yard.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Conductor Wineland and Brakeman Smith to take proper precautions to safeguard the movement which was being made.

Ordinary care on the part of Conductor Wineland would have required that at least one man be stationed on the top of the car being pushed to maintain a lookout, instead of this, no lookout was provided and both men were riding without any necessity therefor in a place that in case of accident was extremely dangerous.

The employees involved were experienced men. At the time of the accident, the crew of engine 4456 had been on duty about 5 hours after off duty periods varying from 16 hours to more than 24 hours.