

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE & ST. PAUL RAILWAY AT DAVENPORT,
IOWA, ON OCTOBER 29, 1926.

November 30, 1926.

To the Commission:

On October 29, 1926, there was a side collision between a passenger train and a yard engine on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway at Davenport, Iowa, resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

Location and method of operation

The Asndale and Mahant Subdivision of the Illinois Division of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway extends between Ashdale, Ill., and Mahant, Iowa, a distance of 62 miles, with the exception that between East Moline, Ill., and Davenport, Iowa, trains are operated over the tracks of the Davenport, Rock Island & Northwestern Railroad. This railroad crosses the Mississippi River between Rock Island, Ill., and Davenport, Iowa. Trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block signal system being in use. There is a wye on the Davenport side of the river; what is known as the bridge switch is the south switch of the wye and is located on the approach to the bridge. The west leg of the wye, 1,340 feet in length, loads off from the bridge switch to the left around a 90° curve to the west wye switch, and thence to Kansas City, Mo. The east leg of the wye, 1,350 feet in length, extends from the bridge switch to the right around a 60° curve to the east wye switch, and thence to Davenport, while the north leg of the wye, known as the straight leg, 1,380 feet in length, extends around a $2^{\circ} 45'$ curve between the east and west wye switches. The accident occurred at the junction of the west leg of the wye with the straight leg, these two legs of the wye belong to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. The grade from the bridge switch around the west leg of the wye is 0.6 per cent descending.

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul train No. 25 operates in this territory as Davenport, Rock Island & North-Western train No. 18, and under the time-table of the last-mentioned railroad it is authorized to pull in on the west leg of the wye and to pass the west wye switch

with right over all opposing trains, and then to back into Davenport via the straight leg of the wye. For the purpose of this report it will be referred to as train No. 25.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 10.47 p.m.

Description

Yard engine 1179, in charge of Yard Conductor Reeves and Enginemen McCormack, left Davenport at 10.33 p.m. for the purpose of lining the wye switches for train No. 25, and then coupling to the rear end of that train and hauling it backward from the west wye switch to the station at Davenport, a distance of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, in order to avoid the necessity of having train No. 25 make a back-up movement over numerous street crossings between these two points. As is customary, yard engine 1179 headed in on the wye at the east wye switch, moved around the east leg and was brought to a stop just beyond the bridge switch; this switch was then lined for the west leg and a back-up movement made around the west leg, the yard engine being brought to a stop just beyond the west wye switch. The west wye switch was lined for the straight leg, and the yard engine headed in on the straight leg, after which the switch was lined for the movement of train No. 25 on the west leg, but before the yard engine could get into clear it was cornered by the engine of train No. 25.

Westbound passenger train No. 25 consisted of one express car, one baggage car, two coaches, one dining car, and two sleeping cars, in the order named, hauled by engine 6134, and was in charge of Conductor Murphy and Enginemen Daley. This train left Rock Island at 10.40 p.m., on time, crossed the bridge over the Mississippi River, entered upon the west leg of the wye at the bridge switch, and was nearing the west wye switch, traveling at a speed variously estimated to have been from 4 to 25 miles an hour, when the engine cornered yard engine 1179.

Engine 6134 scraped the right side of the cab of the yard engine, after which it struck the right front corner of the tender; the yard engine was derailed and somewhat damaged, while the tender was thrown down on an embankment, about 20 feet from the track. None of the other equipment was derailed or materially damaged. The employee killed was the engineman of the yard engine.

Summary of evidence

Yard Conductor Reeves, of yard engine 1179, stated that while at the bridge switch he saw the headlight of train No. 25 at the opposite end of the bridge.

After lining the bridge switch for the west leg of the wye the yard engine made a back-up movement to a point just beyond the west wye switch and Conductor Reeves opened the switch so the yard engine could head in on the straight leg of the wye. When the yard engine started ahead he saw train No. 25 and ran along the side of the cab of his engine and shouted to Engineman McCormack, "Don't try to make it, Mac" at the same time waving stop signals to train No. 25 with his lantern, the accident occurring immediately afterwards. Conductor Reeves said he rode on the rear of the tender while backing around the west leg of the wye and was not in position to observe the approach of train No. 25, but before reaching the west wye switch he instructed Switchman Hopkins, who was also on the footboard of the tender, to drop off on his side, if possible to do so, and flag train No. 25. Conductor Reeves further stated that on previous occasions when the yard engine was on short time it would be brought to a stop on the east leg of the wye, clear of the bridge switch, and then the bridge switch would be lined for the west leg and a proceed signal given to train No. 25, after which the yard engine would follow that train to the west wye switch, couple to the rear of the train and haul it to Davenport. This procedure was not followed on this occasion, however; Conductor Reeves knew train No. 25 was due at the bridge switch at 10.45 p.m., knew it was on time, and admitted that his engine did not clear train No. 25 by five minutes, as required by rule, nor was it protected by flag.

Switchman Hopkins, of yard engine 1179, was also thoroughly familiar with the movement contemplated and had seen train No. 25 approaching from the other end of the bridge. He said he was with Conductor Reeves on the rear footboard of the tender of the yard engine, riding on the left side, and got off at the west wye switch. He then looked back to ascertain the location of train No. 25, and had gotten back about a car-length and was giving train No. 25 a slow signal when the yard engine went by him, on the straight leg of the wye, the accident occurring immediately afterward. He went to the assistance of Engineman McCormack and in conversation the injured engineman said to him, "I had a notion not to go ahead, I had a notion to back up." Switchman Hopkins admitted that the yard engine did not clear train No. 25 by five minutes as required by the rules, and that he did not furnish flag protection as required when working on the time of a first-class train, being of the impression that the yard engine would not attempt to head eastward through the west wye switch directly in front of train No. 25 and also that train No. 25 would approach under control. Switchman Hopkins did not know whether the front headlight was burning at the time of the accident,

saying that often it is extinguished when another train is approaching to enable the crew of the approaching train to see better, Conductor Reeves said both the front and rear headlights on the yard engine were burning.

Fireman White, of yard engine 1179, stated that the first he knew of anything wrong was when he heard train No. 25 approaching, at which time the yard engine was headed through the west wye switch, he looked out of the gangway on the right side, saw the headlight of that train, and shouted to Engineman McCormack, just before the accident occurred. Fireman White further stated that he did not know whether the front headlight on the yard engine was burning at the time of the accident, although he said it was the practice to extinguish the headlight after clearing the west switch. He also said that under conditions similar to those existing on this occasion the headlight of an approaching train could be seen when it was at the bridge switch from the engineman's side of a yard engine standing at the west wye switch, while the headlight of a yard engine standing at the west wye switch could be seen from the fireman's side of an approaching train for a like distance, but not from the engineman's side, owing to the curve.

Engineman Daley, of train No. 25, stated that when his train entered upon the Rock Island approach of the bridge he saw the headlight of the switch engine, and then it disappeared from view. The bridge switch was properly lined and he looked for the yard engine, but did not see anything of it and gave it no more thought, as his train was on time and proceeding only at a low rate of speed, about 4 or 5 miles an hour. The first he knew of anything wrong was when he heard Engineman McCormack snout, and he then saw the yard engine directly in front of his train and applied the air brakes in emergency, the accident occurring simultaneously. He said that his train moved about a car-length, probably a little more, and then stopped. Engineman Daley said he could not see the west wye switch from his side of the cab and that it is not customary for the fireman to tell him the position of the switch as it is supposed to be lined properly and on this occasion the fireman was shutting off the steam heat, being near the end of the trip. He also said the air brakes on his train were in proper working order, and that the front headlight of the yard engine was extinguished.

Fireman Mangan, of train No. 25, stated that when entering upon the bridge he saw the headlight of the yard engine, and then it disappeared from view.

On nearing the west wye switch he noticed that the switch was lined for the movement of his train but that the yard engine was not into clear. He shouted a warning and Engineer Daley applied the air brakes in emergency. Fireman Mangan said he was familiar with the movement being made and was sitting on his seat box looking ahead as his train approached the west wye switch. He verified the engineer's statement that the front headlight of the yard engine was extinguished.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by the crew of yard engine 1179 attempting to make a movement on the tie of an approaching superior train without flag protection, for which Conductor Reeves and Engineer McCormack are responsible.

Under the rules of the Davenport, Rock Island & North Western Railroad, train No. 25 had the right to pull in on the west leg of the wye and pass the west wye switch with rights over all opposing trains. The crew of yard engine 1179 had seen train No. 25 approaching in the distance and were fully acquainted with the rule referred to and with the movement which was being made, while the fact that they also were aware that they were occupying the track on the tie of train No. 25 seems apparent from the statement of Conductor Reeves that he told Switchman Hopkins to get off on his side, if able to do so, and flag train No. 25. Under such circumstances there was no excuse for their failure to prevent the occurrence of this accident, either by providing flag protection or by waiting until train No. 25 had been brought to a stop before attempting to head in on the straight leg of the wye at the west wye switch.

All of the employees involved were experienced men and at the time of the accident none of them had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. Borland,

Director.