CIRCULATED

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE YAZOO & MISSISSIPPI VALLEY RAILROAD AT NONOCONNAH, TENN., APRIL 26, 1918.

May 26, 1938.

On April 26, 1938, there was a head-end collision between a light engine and an employees' train in the Nonoconnah Yard of the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad, near Memphis, Tenn., which resulted in the death of 5 employees and injuries to 35 employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

Nonoconnah Yard is about 5 miles south of Memphis, and as there are no street car facilities, the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad operates an employees' train between South Yard, Memphis, and East Junction, which is the south end of Nonoconnah Yard. It operates over the double track main line from South Yard to East Junction, 3.6 miles, then over double freight running tracks to East Coulen 3640 feet, then on single track engine lead, or running track to West Junction 9086 feet. This employees' train runs at hourly intervals, usually leaving the South Yard at McLemore Avenue on the half-hour and leaving West Junction on the even hour, except at noon and midnight, when the leaving time is varied to accommodate employees' meal hours. This is not a scheduled train and no bulletins or instructions have been issued with respect to its movement, nor is any record kept at any place of the leaving or arriving time or of delays to the train. Movements over the main line are protected by automatic block signals, while yard rules govern on the engine lead.

Engines moving to and from the roundhouse, which is about 4,000 feet south of East Scales, pass over this engine lead. On occasions when the employees' train is met on the engine lead by light engines, the practice is for the latter to get into clear at the nearest switch and allow the employees' train to pass. The track between East Scales and the roundhouse is a series of short curves and tangents and extends along the east side of the yard, beside the switching lead. There is nothing to obstruct the view of enginemen of trains approaching from either direction. The accident occurred on a grade ascending slightly to the south, at the beginning of a 4-degree curve to the left or east. There was a heavy fog at the time.

The employees' train, consisting of 11 cars, all of wooden construction, was hauled by switch engine 863, travelling in backward motion, in charge of Engineman Hogan and Fireman Nelson. It left South Yard at 6.30 a.m., stopped at various points, including East Scales, the last stop before the collision, and about 6.43 a.m. collided with light engine 1867 at a point about 3,436 feet south of East Scales while traveling at a speed of about 6 or 7 miles an hour.

Engine 1867, in charge of Engineman Freel and Fireman Alston, listed to leave "A" Yard, about one-half mile distant from the roundhouse at Normonnah, near East Scales, at 6.30 a.m. on local freight No. 194, en route to Dyersburg, Tenn., left the preparatory track at the roundhouse at about 6.43 a.m., en route eastbound on the engine lead to the outbound yard, and at a point 785 feet north of the switch leading from the preparatory

track to the engine lead collided with the employees' train, having been brought to a stop previous to the collision.

Excepting the flagman, the switching crew in charge of the employees' train, a foreman and two switchmen, were among those killed. All of the killed and three most seriously injured were riding on the front of the engine or on the platform of the front coach. Neither engine was derailed, but the collision derailed the first coach of the employees' train, the platform and steps of both ends of this coach being crushed. The tender rails of engine 263 were bent and broken, while the pilot and end frame of engine 1867 were damaged. Engine 263 was pulled away from its train a distance of about 50 feet, with its tank resting on the pilot beam of engine 1867, badly crushed, indicating that engine 1867 was in backward motion when the two locomotives struck.

Engineman Hogan, of engine 263, hauling the employees' train, stated that the sun was shining when the train departed from South Yard at about 3.30 a.m., and he therefore extinguished his oil headlight before starting. He encountered a very heavy fog at East Junction and because of it was proceeding very slowly. On departing from East Junction he sounded the whistle and told the fireman to ring the bell, and approaching Horn Lake crossing, 1500 feet from the point of collision, sounded crossing whistle. He estimated the speed of his train at 6 miles an hour and said he was looking out of the window just before the collision, the cab window on his side being closed. He said his vision extended only to the end of the tank and that he could not see engine 1867

until it was within 8 or 10 feet of him; he was positive that the headlight on that engine was not burning. His train ran about 10 feet after striking engine 1867. They were due at East Scales at about 6.45 a.m. and were about on time there, but he estimated that after getting into the fog he lost 2 or 3 minutes and thought he was about 1 minute late at the time of the accident. He said the time of arrival of his train at the roundhouse is 6.45 a.m., and the accident occurred at 6.46 a.m., as he looked at his watch immediately afterward. When asked if he had a certain right to the track he said he supposed so, as the trip was made daily at the same time. He had often met light engines on this track, but never in a fog.

Fireman Nelson, of engine 363, stated that at East Scales the yardmaster there told them to look out, as the local engine was somewhere up the track. He told his engineman, who sounded the whistle, while he himself started ringing the bell and continued ringing it until the collision occurred. The train usually arrived at East Scales at 6.40 a.m., but on account of the yardmaster's talking to them, he did not look at his watch while there. They were running about 5 miles an hour when he first saw engine 1867 moving toward them, but a short distance away. He said it was not customary for their train to meet engines on that track, the engines always waiting at the preparatory track.

Switchman Nolan, of engine 363, acting as flagman, stated that the weather was clear when they left McLemore Avenue at 6.30 a.m., the fog being heaviest after leaving East

locales and restricting the view to about 3 car lengths. He was riding in the rear coach and said they were proceeding at a speed of about 3 miles an hour, his first intimation of an accident being when the train came to a sudden stop at 6.49 a.m., this being the time shown by the watch of Foreman Carey, who was killed. He had been on this run since January and had never met a light engine moving from the roundhouse on the time of the employees' train.

Engineman Freel, of engine 1867, stated that after some delay at the roundhouse on account of work not being properly done, the brakeman opened the switch to let his engine out on the running track and they left at 6.43 a.m. Before leaving, he turned on his electric headlight and directed his fireman to ring the bell, this being done by the automatic ringer. He said he and his fireman realised the danger existing under the conditions of the very heavy fog and moved accordingly, proceeding very slowly, looking out for any obstruction which might show up on the track, and he had also cautioned his fireman to keep a sharp lookout. The first indication he had of any danger was when he heard the bell of an approaching engine and he at once applied the air brakes. Just about the time the engine stopped he saw engine 363 coming through the fog; by the time the collision occurred, he had stopped his engine, released the brakes and was giving his engine steam in reverse motion. In his opinion, had the headlight of engine 363 been burning, it would not have enabled him to see it any better. Engineman Freel stated he was familiar with the running time of the em-

ployees' train, it being his custom to ride this train every morning except Saturday. He was aware of the fact that that train was due at the shops at 6.45 a.m., and knew that it had not arrived, but explained the circumstance of his leaving the roundhouse at 6.43 a.m. by stating that enginemen are expected to leave the roundhouse promptly and to move on the running track expecting to meet engines or cars and to proceed until they do so meet, in which event the light engine is expected to take siding and permit the heavier train to pass. He said he had occupied the running track under these conditions many times previously and while he knew that the employees' train had not arrived, he hardly expected to meet it before he arrived at "A" Yard, as he thought it would be late on account of the fog.

Fireman Alston, of engine 1667, stated that they started from the roundhouse about 6.40 or 6.43 a.m. He could not see much farther ahead than the front of the engine and had been keeping a careful lookout, while the engine bell was being rung by the automatic ringer. His first knowledge of danger was when he felt the air brakes being applied; he then leaned out of the window and saw engine 265 not over 10 or 12 feet distant. By this time his own engine had about stopped. He did not know what time the employees' train was due, but knew that it had not arrived; he had no conversation with his engineman concerning it. He said they had met other employees' trains on previous occasions.

Brakeman Williams, of engine 1867, stated that the roundhouse foreman cautioned Engineman Freel to be careful, saying that he might meet the employees' train. Before leaving the preparatory track, he looked at his watch and it was 6.40 a.m. He opened the switch and let the engine out on the running track and upon closing the switch rode on the pilot of the engine, looking out for cars, but could see very little on account of the fog. He said the electric headlight was burning and the bell ringing when they left the roundhouse. He estimated the speed of his engine at not over 4 miles an hour when he saw engine 385 approaching, about 3 car lengths away, and made an effort to fling it before jumping. He estimated the speed of engine 385 at 8 or 10 miles an hour and said that train moved about an engine length after the collision. He thought his own engine had come to a full stop when the collision occurred. He did not see the headlight of engine 385, and said that if it was burning it was very dim. Brakeman Williams said he was familiar with the time of the employees' train, as he had been a regular passenger on it, and knew it was due at the roundhouse at 6.45 a.m. He thought about that train, but did not mention it to Engineman Freel, as he said the roundhouse foreman was there urging them to get out, that they were already late and should have been on their train at that time. He said they usually depart from Nonconnah before the employees' train arrives, but sometimes meet that train on the engine head, and in such cases they head in at a switch about half way to East Dealen and permit the employees' train to pass.

Foreman McFaddon, of Menoonmon RoundHouse, stated that at 6.30 a.m. the engine dispatcher notified him that Engineman Freel reported a defective cylinder cock on his engine and he went down to the engine to inspect the work that had been done. He thought that about 15 minutes was taken up in repairing the defective cylinder cock, after which Engineman Freel occupied 2 or 3 minutes in oiling his engine before he departed and thought it was about 6.40 or 6.45 a.m. when engine 1867 left the roundhouse. He was standing near the engine when it started and as Engineman Freel was pulling out, he yelled to him to look out for the employees' train, but could not say for certain Engineman Freel heard him.

Yardmaster Zanone, a passenger on the employees' train, stated that the train left South Yard at 6.30 a.m. and the fog was heavy all the way from there, but became thicker after leaving East Scales, necessitating their proceeding at lower speed than usual and after leaving East Scales the train proceeded at about 6 or 7 miles an hour. When they were nearing the roundhouse the train came to a sudden stop; he looked at his watch just after the collision and it was 6.40 a.m. He went forward and found engine 283 had stopped about 50 feet beyond the cars, having broken away from the train. He thought engine 1867 was in backward motion when it was struck, and that it had pulled engine 283 away from its train.

In view of the fact that the employees' train was not a scheduled train and had no rights conferred on it by train orders or any information or instructions of any kind issued

in regard to it by bulletin, circular or otherwise, it had no more right to the track on which the accident occurred than did engine 1867. Under these circumstances the only rules which are believed to have any application are Rule 93 of the Book of Rules and Paragraph 8 of the special instructions in the time table. While both of these rules refer to main track movements, they are of general application, and in the event of an accident place the responsibility on the moving train. These rules read as follows:

> 93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first class trains.
> Second and third class trains, and extras, must move within yard limits prepared to stop, unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.
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> Par. 8. Second and inferior class trains, extras, yard engines, light engines and motors will run carefully through Memphis terminals, expecting to find main track occupied. In case of accident the responsibility rests with the moving train.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Hagan, in charge of engine 363, and of Engineman Freel, in charge of engine 1867, to take proper precautions for the safety of their trains in view of the existing weather conditions. Engineman Hagan had been told that there was a light engine on the lead, and with fog so thick that he could not see beyond the end of his tender, he should have sent a flagman ahead of his train. Engineman Freel knew the time the employees' train was supposed to reach the roundhouse and that it had not arrived when his engine left the preparatory track. In view of the weather conditions, he should have remained on the preparatory track until the employees' train arrived or else have sent a flagman ahead of his engine in its movement on the engine lead.

Engineman Hogan was employed as engineman in 1916, previous to which he had had 6 years' experience as engineman on another railroad. His record was good. At the time of the accident, he had been on duty nearly 7 hours after a period off duty of about 13 hours. Engineman Pearl had been employed as an engineman on this railroad for about 15 years, previous to which he had had 13 years' experience on another railroad. In June, 1926, he was dismissed on account of a collision, being reinstated in February, 1928. At the time of the accident, he was just going on duty after a period off duty of about 11 hours.

The conditions surrounding the handling of this employees' train were exceedingly dangerous and practically amounted to an invitation to the occurrence of just such an accident as resulted. The question of double-tracking the engine lead in order to furnish greater safety to the employees' train had been discussed at different times by employees and officials and had been brought to the attention of the Safety Committee, but no definite action had been taken. The officials in charge of operation of this part of the railroad bear a great deal of the responsibility for the occurrence of this accident, and immediate steps should be taken by them to prevent its recurrence. The movement of a train of this character 48 times a day between South Yard and Nonconnah Yard, handling as many as a thousand or more employees on some of its trips, should be governed by definite instructions, either time table or bulletin, and not left to chance and good luck. In view of the fre-

quency of the movement and its comparative importance, it is also believed that immediate steps should be taken toward double-tracking the engine land so that these movements may always be with the current of traffic. Had such a double-track line been available, accidents of this character unquestionably would be prevented.

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