
Editorial Comment

Rules, Standards and Instructions

NEW problems for the railroads are brought forth by the new Interstate Commerce Commission rules, standards and instructions effective October 1, to replace similar regulations which have been in effect since 1939. The new regulations, with a report by the Commission, cover 51 mimeograph pages, and therefore, only abstracts are included in a report published elsewhere in this issue. This abstract quotes only 26 of the 162 new rules, but these are the ones which, for the most part, were the basis of discussion between the railroads and the Commission during the hearings which preceded the revisions and final wording of the regulations as now issued. During the final hearing, discussion dealt with only 10 of the rules and explanations of the railroads' contentions and the reasons of the Commission for making final revisions in some rules or leaving them as they were, are given in detail in the article herewith. In this category, a point of interest in discussing rule 567 is the explanation by the Commission to the effect that, in case of a failure of cab signal or train stop equipment on a locomotive, wayside automatic block signals can be, by rule, changed from permissive to absolute block, and thereby authorize trains to proceed at speeds of less than 80 m.p.h., the same as in automatic block with no cab signaling or train apparatus.

In the new regulations, the long familiar term centralized traffic control is replaced with a new term "Traffic Control System", which is defined as "a block system under which train movements are authorized by block signals whose indications supersede the superiority of trains for both opposing and following movements on the same track". New rule 410 requires the installation of electric locks on hand-throw main track switches in traffic control territories where train speeds exceed 20 m.p.h.

Some of the new regulations will affect a considerable number of railroads. For example, rule 25, quoted elsewhere, may require the installation of "light-out" relays and circuits on certain types of color-light signals with two or more "arms". Rule 309 requires that, at automatic interlockings, a loss of shunt of five seconds or less shall not permit an established route to be changed. Most plants constructed within recent years comply with this requirement, but changes to meet this rule must be made at older plants by October 1, 1952.

Rule 313, which deals with pipe connections in mechanical interlockings, requires that "each pipe shall be riveted to pipe plug with two rivets". Years ago, many railroads used one rivet rather than two. Therefore, in the hearing, the railroads questioned the necessity for going back now to install "second" rivets. This viewpoint was based in part on the thought that within the next few years many of the old mechanical plants will be replaced by new power interlockings or

by power equipment included in centralized traffic control projects. This situation was evidently considered by the Commission, because the final requirement, as issued, allows the railroads to perform this work 20 per cent in each of the next five years.

As stated in the Commission's report, the old rules, standards and instructions were due for revision. The Commission gave the railroads adequate opportunity to offer comments and objections to the new regulations as proposed by the Commission. Considerable give and take were in evidence during the months of negotiations and hearings. Thus, the job of revising these regulations has been finished, with results that may be said to be as satisfactory for all concerned as is practicable under the circumstances.

Modern Communications In Yard and Terminals

BY installing modern communications systems, many railroads are accomplishing phenomenal increases in the efficiency of operation of yards, terminals, freight houses and shops. As used in these fields, radio and inductive systems were discussed recently in these columns, and, therefore, the following comments deal primarily with fixed land line facilities, especially systems using loudspeakers. In this field, the outstanding development within the last few years has been the application of paging speakers and talk-back speakers, which, in each yard, are connected through a panel, ordinarily under the control of a yardmaster. By means of such a system, the yardmaster can keep in touch with the changing conditions affecting his switching crews on the ground throughout his entire yard, and thus direct operations on a minute-to-minute basis, thereby expediting operation which results in better service to the public. The numerous advantages of such systems have been recognized on a considerable number of railroads as is evidenced by the fact that such projects involving 1,527 speakers were completed in 1949. More installations, many of them including new practices, have been completed in 1950, or are now underway.

An installation on the Burlington at Kansas City includes 16 conventional telephones at various locations throughout the yard, and the unusual feature is that these phones are connected to the paging speaker system so that announcements, calls or general warnings can be made quickly, not only by the yardmaster but also by any authorized person at any one of these 16 phones, which are for no other purpose. In a new Diesel locomotive repair shop on the St. Louis-San Francisco at Springfield, Mo., a new automatic telephone exchange system includes loudspeakers by means of which the party being called can be "paged" and thus called quickly to the phone nearest to him, and when he picks up that receiver he is automatically connected to the station making the call. A communications project in an L.C.L. freight transfer at Knoxville, Tenn., on the Southern, includes a novel use of a booth for a checker who thus can work two cars that are being unloaded, as was explained in an article in the July issue. Thus new ideas are being developed constantly to add to the benefits accomplished by installations of modern communications facilities of these general forms.