

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF SAFETY IN RE
INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
DETROIT, MONROE & TOLEDO SHORT LINE RAILWAY, DETROIT
UNITED LINES, NEAR MONROE, MICH., ON SEPTEMBER 2,
1926.

October 9, 1926.

To the Commission:

On September 2, 1926, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Detroit, Monroe & Toledo Short Line Railway, Detroit United Lines, near Monroe, Mich., which resulted in the death of 9 passengers and 1 employee, and the injury of 32 passengers and 4 employees.

Location and method of operation

The Detroit, Monroe and Toledo Division is an electric line which extends between Oakwood, Mich., and Toledo, Ohio, a distance of 51.13 miles, and in the vicinity of the point of accident is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. Superiority of scheduled trains is not conferred by direction, opposing trains meeting at regular time-table meeting points unless otherwise ordered. The collision occurred at a point approximately $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles north of Monroe. Approaching the point of accident from the north the track is tangent for a distance of 2,650 feet, followed by a 4° curve to the left 1,168 feet in length, the accident occurring on the curve at a point about 500 feet from its northern end; approaching from the south the track is tangent for a distance of 3,172 feet, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred, the grade is practically level. Trees bordering the right-of-way and a line of poles on the inside of the curve restricted the range of vision of both motormen to a distance of about 1,000 feet.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 1.24 p.m.

Description

Northbound passenger train No. 223 consisted of motor car No. 7529, of wooden construction, in charge

of Conductor Leatherman and Motorman Schlegel. It left Toledo at 12.25 p.m., on time and was approaching the siding known as Pine, its time-table meeting point with train No. 224, when it collided with that train at a point about one mile from Pine Siding.

Southbound passenger train No. 224 consisted of motor car No. 7096, in charge of Conductor Adams and Motorman Owens. It left Oakwood at 12.45 p.m., on time, and at Rockwood, 18.22 miles distant, the crew received the following orders.

"Meet No. 221 car 7520 at Newport"
"Meet No. 15 car 7312 at Pine"

This train left Rockwood at 1.11 p.m., on time, met the two trains at the points mentioned in its meet orders, passed Pine, its schedule meeting point with train 223 at about 1.23 p.m., still on time, without stopping, and collided with train No. 223 while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 15 miles an hour.

Both cars remained upright but were badly damaged, car 7529 was telescoped for a distance of about 19 feet while car 7096 was telescoped about 6 feet. The employee killed was a student conductor.

Summary of evidence

Motorman Owen, of train No. 224, stated he was used both as a conductor and motorman, his regular run now being as a conductor, although he had always been a motorman until recently. At Rockwood he received the orders to meet train No. 221 at Newport and train No. 15 at Pine, and at the time he passed the siding at Pine he saw the motorman of train No. 15, but did not remember seeing the car number. He admitted that he had entirely forgotten about train No. 223, and said what added to his confusion was the receiving of orders to meet the northbound trains, which were late, at other than their scheduled meeting points. At the time he first noticed train No. 223, his own train was traveling about 45 miles an hour, and he immediately applied the brakes in emergency, opened the sanders and reversed the motors, reducing the speed of his train to about 15 miles an hour when the collision occurred. He estimated the speed of the approaching train to have been greater than the speed at which his own train was traveling. Motorman Owen further stated that on the morning of September 1 he was relieved from duty at 5.45 a.m., after 10 hours on duty, and after getting something

to eat he visited a dentist, returning to his home at 11.00 a.m., and after again eating he went to work at 1.54 p.m., without having had any rest while off duty, and was in continuous service until 11 p.m. the same day. He went to bed at 11.30 p.m., and on the date of the accident he got up at 5 a.m., going on duty at 5.50 a.m., and he said he was not feeling good being in a nervous condition due to a continuous toothache, he continued on duty up to the time of the accident. He said that if his rest had been regular he probably would not have forgotten train No. 223.

Conductor Adams, of train No. 224, stated that he had been in the service 9 months and had been working on this run since August 14. His train left Oakwood at 12.45 p.m., and at Rockwood, the end of double track, he received the orders to meet two northbound trains. Approaching Pine he went to the forward end of the car to check the meet, but when he noticed train No. 15 as they passed he entirely forgot about his time-table meet with train No. 223. He said the first he knew of the impending collision was when the motorman reversed the motors, at which time he went to the front of the car and saw train No. 223 approaching about 300 feet distant. He had had no conversation with the motorman concerning train No. 223 and did not notice anything unusual in the motorman's actions during the trip.

Motorman Schlegel, of train No. 223, stated that he first noticed train No. 224 approaching from a distance of 700 feet; at this time his own train was traveling about 45 miles an hour, and he was unable to say how much the speed had been reduced before the collision occurred, although he said the brakes were in good condition. On account of the serious injuries he received in the accident Motorman Schlegel could not be questioned in detail, while Conductor Leatherman, also of train No. 223, was so seriously injured that no statement from him could be obtained.

The records indicated that Motorman Owen had been on duty 16 hours and 25 minutes in the aggregate during the 24-hour period prior to the accident. Car House Foreman Duvall, who has charge of calling trainmen for duty, and is responsible for their hours on duty, said the error was due to the fact that he did not notice that Motorman Owen had not been on his regular run^{on} the preceding day, resulting in his failure to go off duty at the end of the day as early as would otherwise have been the case.

Conclusions

This accident was caused by train No. 224 over-running a time-table meeting point, for which Conductor Adams and Motorman Owen are at fault.

Both Conductor Adams and Motorman Owen are experienced employees, yet according to their testimony they both completely overlooked their scheduled meeting point with train No. 223. The evidence indicated that Motorman Owen had been on duty more than 16 hours in the aggregate in the 24-hour period prior to the accident; this constituted a violation of the Federal hours of service law. On account of having had dental work performed, and continually suffering from toothache, he had had very little rest when actually off duty, and as a result he felt nervous and depressed. There did not appear to have been any excuse, however, for Conductor Adams' oversight other than becoming confused by receiving orders to meet a northbound train at Pine; having met that train, he then overlooked the fact that his train had a time-table meet with another train at the same point.

The employees involved were experienced men; at the time of the accident, none of them, except Motorman Owen, had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.

Respectfully submitted,

W. P. BORLAND,

Director.