

Safe Versus Unsafe Switching Practices

By P. F. NEFF

Inspector of Safety, Pennsylvania Railroad

The speaker said in part: Let us first get a common understanding of what an unsafe practice is. Many safety men have an idea *what* it is but a great many of them have a hard time trying to tell you *why* it is. What is considered an unsafe method by one person may not be so considered by another, therefore reasonable grounds for a conclusion should be given. Here is my conception:

An unsafe practice is the performance of an act wherein the method employed to perform it indicates the person is failing to use every precaution necessary to avoid an accident of any nature.

The reason, therefore, may be due to the following causes: (1) inability to anticipate the consequences of such a failure; (2) ignorance of the proper precautions to take; (3) having acquired the habit of performing it that way; (4) failure to receive proper instructions in the method to be used; (5) failure to understand previous instructions given; (6) if understood, failure to comply with the instructions, either willfully, physical inability, or material defects.

The why of an unsafe practice has many angles of approach, none of which can be ignored if the practice is to be eliminated.

(The speaker then showed a large number of lantern slides illustrating specific instances where unsafe practices were employed by workers on the railroads.)

Report of Committee on Train Accidents

By GEORGE H. WARFEL

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After showing a number of tables giving comparable figures on the various types of train accidents over a period of ten years extending from 1922 to 1931 inclusive, the speaker said in part:

Head and rear collisions have always been the most spectacular of railroad accidents. I have wondered whether or not we safety men actually realize that head and rear collisions have been reduced more notably in the last ten years than in any other period and have been reduced more notably than any other class of accidents. We have a reduction of 65 per cent in ten years for all collisions, and 75 per cent in ten years for head and rear collisions.

There is another type of accident, however, which I believe when all is said and done, could be most definitely held up as a true index of safety performance on railroads. As a measure of safety work, derailment seems to be composed of the very essence of accident prevention work. One of the factors undoubtedly contributing to a reduction in derailments is the increase in average length and average speed of freight trains. The average length of all freight trains operated has increased 25 per cent, and the average speed of all freight trains has increased 33 per cent in the last ten-year period. Nevertheless we have had a reduction in the total number of derailments of 65 per cent.

If the Safety Section ever needed substantiation of their claims for the improvement made in the operation of railroads, substantiation of their casualty rates and of their references to persons killed and injured, this record on derailment should certainly give backing to every safety man in the country.

Nevertheless, we are perhaps inclined to be over enthusiastic about our 1931 performance. We have always been engaged in a military movement, we might say, in an aggressive attack upon carelessness and upon accidents. Since 1923, a wonderful campaign has been waged. Our flying squadrons, and these are the

railroads whose rates have been greatly reduced, have advanced to far distant positions and it has been largely through the advance of these occasional squadrons that the average of our performance has been so greatly improved. We have made some new steps in 1931, and there is a thing we haven't taken into consideration: The ground that we have traveled over in this last year in pressing this salient forward, (to use an old illustration) was much easier ground to work over than it has been in preceding years.

Whenever the business of this country begins to really improve, whenever the business of our railroads begins to really improve, when the intensity of our traffic begins to concentrate again, we are not going to have such pleasant figures to look at as we are looking at today. On many railroads there will never be again the fraction or the percentage of velvet man-hours that we have had in the past. Great numbers of clerical forces have been reduced, consolidations have been made, and I doubt very seriously whether we will ever see again the organizations that we had on railroads three or four or five years ago.

Furthermore, this easy ground that we have gone over has had the result of making us possibly over confident, and if 1933, or this last year of the "33 by '33" should develop a wonderful come-back, we will have much more difficulty in coming in here with a reduction comparable to 1931 and 1932. We should be consolidating our positions now. We should be bringing up all the rear troops of education and enlightenment and pressure that we can, and get the nucleus force that we now have on railroads so thoroughly trained and so thoroughly imbued that they will carry out this safety program. There is no greater mistake we can make than to let our enthusiasm wane, let the enthusiasm of our men wane now in this easy period of our campaign, because there is going to be a counter attack.

The Economic and Other Values of Safety

By O. H. PAGE

General Superintendent, Atlantic Coast Line Railroad

The speaker said in part: Sometimes we hear the question, "What about this safety movement? What does it mean? What are you trying to accomplish?"

With the greatest pride, we may answer that question in language and figures of accomplishment on American railroads. In 1923, there were killed on the American railroads 2,056 employees and 147,936 injured. Quite an appalling situation. In 1930, those figures had been reduced by methodical means of safety to 972 killed and 33,107 injured, a reduction of a little over 77 per cent.

Again I mention with the greatest pride that the railroads of this country have reduced passengers killed by railroad accidents, all classes, from 229 in 1920 to 41 in 1931—82 per cent.

A meat packing concern found by the application of safety methods that they could cut down their cost per payroll for each \$100 from \$125 to 33c in three years, a reduction of 73 per cent.

It has been found by a stone company in its operations that by the application of safety methods, \$62,000 a year has been saved.

One of our leading railroads has paid particular attention to safety work and it is shown that in 1923 that railroad paid out for personal injuries \$432,000. But in 1931 that sum had been reduced to \$135,000, a saving of about \$300,000, or 69 per cent.

I have watched this safety movement very carefully and as I went about attending the different safety meetings I always tried to leave the thought indelibly impressed upon the employees, "This is your movement, something started and carried on in your behalf. You are the greatest beneficiary." And the response to that appeal has been fine and noble.