

Aitchison
CIRCULAR LETTER *June 22/20*

688.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED
ON THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD NEAR
NOVA, OHIO, ON APRIL 8, 1920.

June 12, 1920.

On April 8, 1920, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad near Nova, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 1 employee. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

This accident occurred on the New Castle Division; in the territory within which this accident occurred it is a double-track line and trains are operated by time-table, train orders, and a manual block-signal system. Under the rules trains which do not carry passengers are permitted to enter an occupied block under permissive signal, provided 5 minutes have elapsed since the departure of the preceding train, and also provided the preceding train does not carry passengers. When entering an occupied block in this manner trains are required to be operated under control, prepared to stop short of any obstruction.

The accident occurred about 2 miles east of Nova, approaching which point from the east the track is tangent for more than 1 mile; the grade is slightly ascending. At the time of the accident it was snowing.

Westbound freight train No. 98, in charge of Conductor Hessler and Engineman Roenbaugh, and consisting of engine 2865, 48 cars and a caboose, arrived at Sterling, Ohio, via the Cleveland Division, at 3.26 a. m. The train departed from Sterling

over the New Castle Division as extra 2865 at 4.05 a. m., and at 5.05 a. m. passed MR Tower, the last open telegraph office east of the point of accident and about 7 miles therefrom. At about 5.40 a. m., while running at a speed variously estimated at from 12 to 18 miles an hour, the rear end of this train was struck by extra 4127.

Westbound freight train extra 4127 was in charge of Conductor Neiswonger and Engineman Toepfer, and consisted of engine 4127 and a caboose. This train passed MR Tower at 5.25 a. m. under a permissive signal indication, and was running at a speed variously estimated as between 15 and 20 miles an hour when it collided with extra 2865.

The rear truck of the caboose of extra 2865 was derailed and the caboose was telescoped nearly its entire length by the box car immediately ahead of it, being practically destroyed. The rear truck of the car ahead of the caboose was also derailed, while a box car about 10 car lengths from the rear of the train and another near the center of the train were slightly damaged. The engine of extra 4127 was also damaged to some extent. The employee killed was the conductor of extra 2865.

Extra 2865 had passed MR Tower under a clear signal indication. According to Flagman Matthews, the conductor, who was riding on the right side of the cupola, was the first to notice the approach of extra 4127, and on looking toward it he saw it was only about 5 car lengths distant. The collision occurred before he had time to get out of the caboose.

Extra 4127 left MR Tower under a permissive indication,

and Engineman Toepfer said that after rounding the curve located about 1-1/2 miles east of the point of accident he saw a dark object about 125 car lengths distant and supposed that it was a train, although he did not see any red lights. He eased off on the throttle; after traveling a distance estimated by him to have been about 50 car lengths, however, he said he fell asleep, and did not awaken until the collision occurred.

The stoker with which this engine was equipped had been causing trouble and approaching the point of accident the fireman was working on it, knowing nothing of impending danger until the collision actually occurred. The fireman said that Engineman Toepfer was awake and shut off steam at Sullivan, approximately 2 miles east of the point of accident. The two brakemen of extra 4127, who were riding in the cupola of the caboose, said that at times it was impossible to see ahead on account of smoke and snow; neither they nor the conductor had noticed the caboose of extra 2865.

Examination of the stoker of engine 4127 showed that it was in good condition and would work if properly regulated.

This accident was caused by Engineman Toepfer of extra 4127 falling asleep, and on that account failing properly to control his train when proceeding under a permissive signal in an occupied block.

Engineman Toepfer had been ill during the month of February; he thought he had not been regaining his strength as rapidly as he should, and that probably he should not have been working, but he felt he could not afford to be idle. He went off duty at

7.35 a. m. April 6, and had slept about 4 hours during the middle of the day and about 11 hours that night, arising at 7.30 a. m. April 7. He was awake during the day and at 9.30 p. m. was called to go on duty at 11.25 p. m., having been on duty at the time of the accident about 6 hours and 15 minutes. With the exception of the fireman, who had been off duty about 8 hours, all of the other members of the crew of extra 4127 had been on duty about 6 hours, after having been off duty about 40 hours. The crew of extra 2866 had been on duty about 8-1/2 hours, after about 13 hours of duty.

Engineman Boepfer was employed as a fireman in 1889 and promoted to engineman in 1903. His record shows that on at least two previous occasions he had been disciplined for not operating his train with proper care in an occupied block, on one of which a rear-end collision resulted.