

INV. 299
October 30, 1915.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON
THE BUTTE, ANACONDA & PACIFIC RAILWAY,
AT ROCKER, MONT., ON OCT. 4, 1915.

On October 4, 1915, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and two electric locomotives on the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway at Rocker, Mont., which resulted in the injury of 31 passengers and 6 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

The Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway is a single track line, extending between Butte and Anaconda, Mont., a distance of 25.7 miles. No block signal system is in use, trains being operated by time-table and train orders. Trains are hauled by electric locomotives operated under the multiple unit system, as many locomotives as may be desired being coupled together and operated by one engineman and fireman.

Eastbound passenger train No. 6 consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car and 7 coaches, hauled by electric locomotive 63, and was in charge of Conductor Marwin and Engineman Layton. It left Anaconda at 3:00 p.m., on time, passed Silver Bow at 3:41 p.m., on time, and at 3:47 p.m. collided with electric locomotives 59 and 62 near the western end of the yard at Rocker, at a point 3,400 feet west of the passenger station, while traveling at a speed estimated to have been about 35 miles an hour.

Electric locomotives 59 and 63, in charge of Conductor-

Farrell and Engineman Powers, had hauled a freight train from Anaconda to Rooker, arriving at Rooker at 3:20 p.m. The train had been set out at this point and another train made up to haul back to Anaconda. After the cabooses had been placed on the rear of this train Conductor Farrell came out of the passenger station, near the eastern end of the yard, with train orders, and gave them to the engineman. He then lined up the main track switch and gave the engineman a signal to back out upon the main track. The Conductor then closed the switch and gave the engineman a signal to proceed west-erly on the main track, in order to get the locomotives on the head end of the train, this movement on the main line being necessary on account of the other tracks in the yard being blocked with cars. When the locomotives started down the main track the engineman and fireman were in the rear cab of locomotive 63, with locomotive 59 ahead of them, this having been the cab in which they were riding when arriving at Rooker. After reaching the head end of their train it had been their intention to change from the rear cab of locomotive 63 to the forward cab of locomotive 59 for the return tri to Anaconda. When the locomotive passed him Conductor Farrell boarded the rear locomotive and told the engineman that they had time enough to go to the western end of the yard. The two locomotives then started toward the western end of the yard, and had nearly reached it when Engineman Powers saw the passenger train approaching. He at once applied the air brakes in emergency and reversed the current, reducing the speed to about 15 miles an hour when the collision occurred.

All three locomotives were derailed and considerably damaged, as well as the combination car of the passenger train. The two coaches were also damaged to some extent.

The collision occurred on a curve of 3 degrees to the right for eastbound trains, this curve being 731 feet in length. The point of collision was 460 feet west of the eastern end of the curve. Approaching this curve from the east there is a tangent 4,000 feet in length. Approaching from the west there is 1,400 feet of tangent. The grade is about one-half of one per cent ascending for eastbound trains.

Conductor Farrell stated that he had figured that they had time enough in which to go to the western end of the yard before train No. 6 arrived. When he boarded the locomotive Engineman Powers said something about the time and he told him that it was 3:41 p.m. Conductor Farrell further stated that he knew that he would be occupying the main track on the time of the passenger train and that he knew that he had no right to be there. The only reason he advanced for trying to make the movement was that he thought he could make it before the arrival of train No. 6.

Engineman Powers stated that after giving a signal to back up the main line, the conductor boarded the engine, looked at his watch, and said that it was 3:41 p.m. Engineman Powers then looked at his own watch and stated that it was then exactly one-half minute after 3:40 p.m. He stated that he then knew he would be occupying the main track on the time of train No. 6, which was due to leave Silver Bow at 3:41 p.m., but the conductor told him to keep his head and to watch to see if he could see the

passenger train coming. He also stated that some flat cars on the inside of the curve had obscured his vision until he stood up in the cab. When Engineman Powers saw the passenger train he applied the air brakes and opened the sanders, and had just reversed the current when the collision occurred. Engineman Powers further stated that the speed of the two locomotives when he saw the passenger train was from 18 to 20 miles an hour.

Fireman Jordon stated that when the conductor boarded the locomotive he saw Engineman Powers look at his watch, and he at once took out his own watch, and it was then a half minute after 3:42 p.m. He stated that it did not seem more than a minute after this when the collision occurred.

Engineman Layton, of train No. 6, who was seriously injured, stated that the collision occurred at 3:47 p.m., while the conductor and engineman of a work train on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway, whose track is parallel to the tracks of the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway at this point, stated that their train was within 200 feet of the point of collision; they looked at their watches immediately afterwards and it was then 3:47 p.m.

This accident was caused by electric locomotives 59 and 63 occupying the main track on the time of a first-class train, for which Conductor Farrell and Engineman Powers are responsible.

Rule No. 66 of the operating rules of this railway provides as follows:

"An inferior train must keep out of the way of

opposing trains and failing to clear the main track track by the time required by rule, must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99."

"Extra trains must clear the time of regular trains five minutes unless otherwise provided, and will be governed by train orders with respect to opposing extra trains."

The conductor and engineman in charge of the two electric locomotives not only entirely disregarded these rules, but attempted to run a distance of nearly 1 mile toward the passenger train after it was due to leave Silver Bow, a station 2.9 miles distant, without any protection whatever.

Engineman Powers was employed in 1905 and was made an engineman in 1909. On August 25, 1911, he was given a suspension of 6 months for running by a stop signal, and on December 23, 1913, he was given 50 demerits for responsibility in connection with a collision. Conductor Farrell entered the service in May, 1911, and was made a conductor in 1914. His record was clear.

None of the employees involved in this accident had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the Hours of Service law.