

INV. 506.  
NOVEMBER 23, 1915.

IN THE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON  
THE CHESAPEAKE & OHIO RAILWAY, AT KEESWICK, VA.,  
NOVEMBER 2, 1915.

On November 2, 1915, there was a rear-end collision between two extra freight trains on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway at Keeswick, Va., which resulted in the death of 3 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety submits the following report:

The Piedmont District of the Richmond Division of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, on which this accident occurred, is a single track line. The movement of trains is governed by timetable, train orders and a manual block signal system, orders being transmitted by telephone, as supplemented by the telegraph. Freight trains are permitted to enter an occupied block with a caution card authorized by the dispatcher. Unless protected by block signals following movements are spaced ten minutes apart. The point of collision was about 14 feet west of the station at Keeswick, on a curve of 3 degrees, 1455 feet in length, this curve leading to the right for eastbound trains. On account of a bluff on the inside of the curve the maximum range of vision is limited to about 500 feet. The grade at this point is 0.66 percent descending for eastbound trains. The weather was clear.

Eastbound freight train extra 563 consisted of 13 cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive 565, and was in charge of Conductor Centry and Engineer Willard. It left Charlottesville, Va., at about 10:15 p.m., and at 10:19 p.m. stopped for orders at Keeswick, the first station east of Charlottesville, and 7.3 miles

distant therefrom. The train had been standing at Keewick about one minute when it was struck by eastbound freight train extra 509.

Eastbound freight train extra 509 consisted of locomotives 509 and 517, backing up, and hauling a caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Souder. Engineer Vase on locomotive 509, and Engineer Gancert on locomotive 517. This extra left Charlottesville shortly after extra 583, having received train order No. 32 to run extra Charlottesville to Lindsay, as well as caution card, form B, reading as follows:

"Charlottesville Block Station 11/3/1915. Time 9:25 P.M. Conductor and Engineer Ex. No. 509 must will proceed cautiously from Charlottesville to Keewick, expecting to find the last Eastbound train Ex. No. 583 that passed here at \_\_\_\_\_ M.

Shackleford, Signalman."  
(Conductor and Engineer must each have copy of this card.)"

At Keewick extra 509 collided with the rear end of extra 583 while running at a speed of about 10 miles per hour. The engineer and the fireman on the leading locomotive, 509, were killed, as was also the head brakeman, who was riding on this locomotive.

7 As a result of the collision, locomotive 509 was turned over down a 30-foot fill on the right side of the track, coming to rest bottom upward about 20 feet from the track. The caboose and the rear car of extra 583 were demolished and consumed by a fire that started at the time of the accident, and the second car from the rear of this train was badly damaged and was destroyed by the wrecking crew.

Conductor Gentry, of extra 583, stated that he started from Charlottesville at 10:15 p.m., leaving the switch at the

east end of the yard in charge of the crew of extra 509, and arrived at Keswick at 10:20 p.m. As soon as his train stopped at Keswick he told his flagman to go back and look out for the following train, although he had not seen extra 509 at any place between Charlottesville and Keswick, and the flagman got a fusee immediately and started back on a run. He further stated that he heard the approaching extra sound one blast of the whistle, but he could not say how far the extra was from his caboose at that time. The caboose markers were burning at the time of the accident, which occurred at 10:30 p.m.

Engineman Dillard of extra 563 stated that they left Charlottesville at 10:15 p.m., that he did not know exactly what time they arrived at Keswick, but that the order they received at that point was signed at 10:30 p.m. He stated that he did not whistle out a flag when he stopped at Keswick and that he had been standing at the station but a very short time - not more than two minutes - when the accident occurred.

Flagman Gentry of extra 757 stated that his train left Charlottesville at 10:15 p.m., arrived at Keswick at 10:20 p.m., and was struck by extra 509 at 10:30 p.m. He stated that as soon as his train slowed up he got a torpedo, white lantern and a fusee, which he lighted, and when he reached the rear platform of the caboose he heard extra 509 coming. He jumped off and started back on a run, but at this time he could not see extra 509 because of the cut and the hill on the inside of the curve. He stated that he ran back about 400 feet from his caboose, giving stop signals with his fusee, and that he heard one short blast of the whistle in answer to his signals. He stated that the brakes on extra 509

were applied and the wheels sliding, and in his opinion the train was running about 18 miles an hour when it passed him.

Head Brakeman Duke of extra 365 stated that his train left Charlottesville at 10:15 p.m., arrived at Keswick at 10:29 p.m., and that the accident happened as he was getting on the locomotive to deliver to the engineer an order received at Keswick. He stated that his train had been there possibly a minute or two.

Conductor Jander of extra 599 stated that it was 10:15 p.m. when his train was leaving the yard at Charlottesville. He stated that he showed the caution card to Engineer Conzert on the second locomotive, and then gave it to Engineer Voss on the leading locomotive. He further stated that before leaving Charlottesville he handed the caution card to Engineer Voss and said: "Here's the card, Joe, we are going to follow this man," but that he said nothing to him as to how to regulate his speed. He stated that he told the crew of extra 565 to go ahead, that he would close the switch for them, as his train was going to use it; he had not seen the orders held by Conductor Gentry and did not know that extra 363 would stop at Keswick. His understanding as to the speed of a train running on a caution card was that it should be under control, and, considering the grades and curves, he thought that his train was not being run in accordance with good judgment and the requirements of the rules, and intended to re-negotiate with his engineer. He further stated that there was no reason why he could not have used the conductor's emergency valve to stop the train, as the air was cut through from the leading locomotive to the caboose. He stated further that he knew that, in accordance with instructions on the caution card, his train

should proceed carefully in following extra 503 from Charlottesville to Keswick. He stated that just before the accident occurred Brakeman Smith, who was sitting on the right side of the cupola, called to him to "look out," and then applied the air-brakes by using the emergency valve in the caboose. Previous to this he had not heard any whistle signals sounded by the engine-men of his train, and had not felt any application of the brakes. He did not see the flagman of extra 503 until after the accident occurred. It was his opinion that extra 503 may have left Charlottesville at 10:05 p.m., or a few minutes afterwards, but he thought 10 minutes had elapsed after it left before his train pulled out. He stated that he knew the speed permitted trains when backing up was only 15 miles an hour, and that his train was running from 30 to 35 miles an hour from Charlottesville to Keswick, and thought that the speed of the train at the time of collision was about 15 miles an hour. He did not know exactly what time the accident occurred, as he did not look at his watch at that time. He looked a few minutes afterwards, however, and it was then 10:34 p.m.

Engineman Gansert, on locomotive 517, the second locomotive of extra 509, stated that he had forgotten what time they left Charlottesville. He did not know what time extra 503 left, as he did not see it depart. He knew his train was running on a caution card following extra 503, and in his opinion waited 10 minutes before they pulled out. He stated that approaching Keswick, Engineman Vase shut off steam about 350 yards west of the point of the accident. Engineman Vase whistled for brakes, and his fireman called to him that he saw the flagman. He stated-

that he felt the brakes being applied on his locomotive, that the condition of the brakes was good, and they did not lock. He himself saw the flagman on the north side of the track just before the accident occurred; he was about 150 feet west of the caboose, and was giving stop signals with a burning fusee. He thought the speed of his train at the time of the accident was about 8 miles an hour and considered himself jointly responsible with any engineman with whom he might be double-heading for any violation of rules or orders.

Fireman Ganzert, of locomotive 517, stated that it was between 10:10 p.m. and 10:15 p.m. when his train left Charlottesville, following extra 563 under a caution card. He did not know what time extra 563 left, but he knew that it left just ahead of his train. He stated that approaching Keswick the caboose of extra 563 was about 3 car lengths away when he saw the markers, and at the same time he saw the flagman. He told his engineman that he saw the flagman giving stop signals with a fusee. He thought the speed between Charlottesville and Keswick was over 15 miles an hour, and at the time of the accident was about 8 miles an hour.

Flagman Smith, of extra 539, said that he looked at his watch at Charlottesville when he and the conductor coupled the caboose to the locomotive, and it was then 10:10 p.m. He thought it took a couple of minutes to get out on the main track and throw the switch, and that the train left between 10:10 p.m. and 10:15 p.m. He stated that 10 minutes must elapse before one freight train may follow another in the same block on a caution

card, and thought extra 563 had been gone from Charlottesville 6 or 8 minutes before his train left the east end of the yard. He thought extra 599 was running from 15 to 20 miles an hour between Charlottesville and Keswick, and knew the speed permitted locomotives backing up was but 15 miles an hour. He thought Engineman Vase exceeded the speed limit in some places, and so stated to Conductor Souder. He stated there was no reason why Conductor Souder could not have stopped the train, or reduced the speed with the emergency valve, if he had wanted to, but that he made no effort to do so. He stated that the engineman shut off when approaching Keswick, and that he saw the flagman of extra 563 just before the accident occurred, giving violent stop signals with a fusee, and thought he was about 6 or 7 car lengths from the caboose. He stated that he did not hear any whistle signal sounded by his engineman, nor did he feel any application of the air-brakes until he himself applied them by using the emergency valve.

Operator Checkler, at Charlottesville, stated that Conductor Gentry of extra 563 received his orders about 8:44 p.m., and that he instructed the conductor that the block would be clear upon the arrival of train No. 65. He did not know what time extra 563 left Charlottesville, but entered the time as "10:15 p.m.," in accordance with report as made by Conductor Gentry at Keswick. He stated that when he gave extra 563 the caution card he did not show on the card the time extra 563 left, because he did not know it. He did not enter on the block book the time extra 599 left Charlottesville.

Rule No. 311 of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway provides

as follows:

"When it is necessary to allow a train to follow another into a block, the signalman will issue caution card (Form B) when authorized by the train dispatcher or by Rule 319. A train shall not be allowed to enter a block occupied by a passenger train, except as provided in Rule 319, or by special order."

In accordance with this rule a caution card was issued to extra 599, and it was permitted to follow extra 563 in the block, proceeding with caution, expecting to find the block occupied by that train. Time-table rule D limits the speed of

"Trains running backward, with or without cars, 15 miles per hour."

This investigation discloses that extra 563 left Charlottesville at 10:15 p.m., and that extra 599 left immediately after. The crew of extra 599 admit that their train was moving at a speed in excess of that permitted by rule, and it is obvious that but very little attention, if any, was being paid to the requirements of the caution card under which they were operating. The investigation further discloses that the air-brakes were in good working order, and there was no reason why Conductor Souder could not have controlled the speed of his train by means of the conductor's valve in the caboose, had he so desired. Extra 563 had been at Keswick only a minute or two, the flagman had promptly started back to protect against the following extra, and had only been able to get back a short distance from his caboose when the following train ran past him at a speed of 15 miles an hour or more, and collided with his train.

This accident was caused by the failure of the crew of extra 599 to run between Charlottesville and Keswick as required by caution card, form B, which they received at Charlottesville,



permitting them to enter the block while it was occupied by extra 503, together with their failure to observe time-table rule D, which required them to run not to exceed 15 miles an hour while moving backward, for which Conductor Souder and Enginemen Vase and Consert are responsible.

All the employees connected with this accident were experienced men with good records, thoroughly familiar with the district over which they were operating, and had been on duty about two hours at the time of the accident.