

January 22, 1915.

In re investigation of accident which
occurred on the Chicago Great West-
ern Railroad at Cornelia, Iowa,
on December 17, 1914.

Inv-239

On December 17, 1914, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Chicago Great Western Railroad at Cornelia, Iowa, which resulted in the death of 3 employees and the injury of 3 employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Westbound local freight train No. 87 consisted of 10 loaded cars, 9 empty cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotives Nos. 261 and 262 and was in charge of Conductor Munn and Enginemen West and Etienne. It was bound from Hayfield, Minn. to Clarion, Iowa. It left Burchinal, the last open telegraph office at 7.58 p.m., 7 hours and 2 minutes late, and at about 9.15 p.m. collided with extra 130 at Cornelia, which is 31 miles from Burchinal.

Extra 130 had been engaged in work train service between Clarion and Thornton, Iowa, and was returning west to Clarion, the locomotive backing up with the caboose. It reached Cornelia at about 8.55 p.m., where it stopped to get a steam. The train had just started, at 9.15 p.m., when it was struck by train No. 87.

Slight damage was sustained by locomotive No. 130 and by the leading locomotive on train No. 87. The wreckage of the caboose of extra 130 caught fire and was destroyed. The 3 employees killed, together with 7 of the 3 injured, were riding in the caboose, the eighth employee injured being the fireman on the second locomotive of train No. 87.

This part of the Chicago Great Western Railroad is a single track line. No block signal system is used, trains being operated by-

train orders and time-card rights. Approaching Cornelia from the east there is a tangent 3,520 feet in length, followed by a curve of 1 degree 33 minutes, 1,380 feet in length; then there is a tangent of 240 feet followed by another curve to the left of 4 degrees, 815 feet in length. It was near the end of this second curve that the collision occurred. An embankment on the inside of this curve, together with 2 box cars on the siding, materially obscured the view of the enginemen of train No. 87. The weather was clear.

On their arrival at Thornton the crew of work extra 130 received at 5.30 p.m. a copy of train order No. 70, annulling their work order and directing them to operate their train to Clarion ahead of train No. 87. This order read as follows:

"Order No. 60 annulled. Eng. 130 run extra Thornton to Clarion ahead of No. 87. Meet Exa. 234 east at Thornton."

This order was also addressed to train No. 87 but before being delivered to the crew of that train it was annulled by train order No. 83, sent to the operator at Thornton. This resulted in the crew of train No. 87 having no orders regarding the extra while the crew of the extra still held their train order directing them to operate their train to Clarion ahead of train No. 87.

Conductor Eley, of work extra 130, stated that it arrived at Cornelia at about 8.55 p.m. He had not expected to stop there and told the enginemen that if they were to be there long it would be best to back in on the side track but the engineman replied that they would be there only about 5 minutes. Conductor Eley stated that he then directed the sectionmen who were riding in the caboose to secure grain car doors to break up to be used for fuel in the engine. After the men had started to do so he went back into the

caboose. Flagman Cogswell was outside and he supposed that he was doing his duty as a flagman. When the engineman sounded the whistle and started ahead, Conductor Eley got up to see where the flagman was and as he did so he saw the headlight on the locomotive hauling train No. 87. He had just time enough to jump off before the collision occurred. Conductor Eley further stated that train order No. 70 only gave him the right to run ahead of train No. 87, he being in no way relieved of the duty of seeing that his train was properly protected according to the requirements of rule No. 99. He also stated that he told the engineman that they had no time on train No. 87 and had better pull down and back in if they were to be there long, and told the flagman that they wanted to watch out for train No. 87. If Flagman Cogswell was in the caboose before the train left Cornelia, he did not see him and as the flagman was a qualified conductor he thought it unnecessary to tell him what to do.

Flagman Cogswell testified that when the extra stopped at Cornelia, he left the caboose and asked the engineman what he wanted, the engineman replied that they would have to get some more grain doors for fuel. He then went into the caboose and told the conductor that he would take the sectionmen and go after the grain doors. When the sectionmen came out, he went with them to assist in getting the doors, breaking them up and putting them on the engine. When the engineman said that they had enough he asked him how long it would be before he would be ready to go, and when the latter said in about 5 minutes Flagman Cogswell stated that he would go into the caboose and get wares, and that when he was ready, to whistle and if it was all

right to go he would give him a proceed signal. He then went inside the caboose and in about a minute he told the conductor that he was afraid that train No. 37 would overtake them. He stated that the conductor told him not to worry about that; that the crew of train No. 37 would be on duty 16 hours before they could reach the terminal and would therefore have to tie up at some point for rest. Flagman Cogswell stated that this relieved his mind to some extent concerning the protection of his train. At about this time the engine-man sounded the whistle and he gave him a proceed signal. The train then started to move and Flagman Cogswell went back into the caboose. Shortly afterward he saw the reflection of the electric headlight on the locomotive hauling train No. 37 and called to the men inside of the caboose to jump, at the same time doing so himself. He further stated that nothing was said to him by the conductor about protecting the train and that to the best of his knowledge no attempt to do so was made by any member of the crew.

Engineman McNeilus stated that while the section men were getting the train doors, Flagman Cogswell came forward and asked him how long it would be before they would be ready to proceed and that he replied that he would go as soon as he could get sufficient steam. The flagman then said that he had to go back and for the engineman to whistle when he was ready. From this statement of the flagman, the engineman understood that he was going back to protect the train; and he did not sound any whistle signal for that purpose. It was 9.13 p.m. when he sounded the whistle preparatory to proceeding. His train had moved but a short distance when he looked around and at about the same time he heard two short blasts of the whistle. He at once realized that there was a train behind his own train and

opened wide the throttle in the attempt to get out of the way. Engineman McNiellus further stated that on account of the condition of his locomotive, he was very busy attending to it and did not know where the other members of the crew were. He had had trouble with the locomotive the entire day, and about noon asked the dispatcher to furnish him with another but was told that there was none available. On the arrival of his train at Cornelia, the steam pressure was only 50 pounds; the crown sheet had been leaking all day while in the afternoon the flues began to leak. Steam, also, started to escape around the crown bolts, the crown sheet cracking a little along the side where there was a patch at the connection between the side sheet and the crown sheet. This leaky condition of the locomotive was responsible for the lack of steam.

Engineman West, of the leading locomotive of train No. 87, stated that as his train was approaching the station at Cornelia at the rate of 25 miles per hour, he heard either the fireman or brakeman calling to him that there was a train immediately ahead. He whistled for the engineman of the second locomotive to shut off steam and applied the brakes, the collision occurring immediately afterwards. He further stated that he had received no train order relative to work extra 130 and that he knew that that train was to run ahead of his train from Thornton to Clarion, he would not have operated his train at a faster rate of speed than the speed attained by the work extra and would have been prepared to stop within his range of vision at all times, which at this particular point was only about 3 car lengths.

Dispatcher Hudelson stated that train order No. 70, although addressed to train No. 87 at Thornton, was not delivered to it,

as the station at Thornton closed before train No. 87 reached that point. He further stated that train order No. 70 was only a permissive order to the extra and did not restrict the rights of train No. 87 in any way. Had the crew of train No. 87 received it, they would not have had to maintain any sharper lookout for the extra than they would have otherwise, and would have had a perfect right to maintain a speed of 25 miles per hour, the rate allowed freight trains.

Operating rule No. 99 reads as follows:

"When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, and place one torpedo upon the rail. When recalled, he must place an additional torpedo sixty feet from the first one before returning to his train.

"The front of a train must be protected in the same way by the head brakeman, or, when necessary, by the fireman."

According to their own statements the crew of the extra made no attempt whatever to comply with this rule.

This accident was caused by extra 130 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train without proper protection, for which Conductor Eley and Flagman Cogswell are responsible. Conductor Eley was in charge of the train and it was his duty to know that his train was properly protected. Flagman Cogswell was fully acquainted with the requirements of rule No. 99, knew that train No. 87 was at some point behind his own train and that no one was making any effort to protect the extra in accordance with this rule. There can be no excuse for the failure of these employees properly to attend to their duties.

Train order No. 70 was not delivered to the crew of train No. 87. The office at Thornton was a day office, closing at 7.20 p.m., and in order not to hold the operator on duty, the dispatcher annulled the order to the operator at 7.27 p.m. The crew of train No. 87, therefore, had no knowledge of the fact that the extra had the right to run ahead of them. A proper regard for safety should have required that the dispatcher keep the office at Thornton open until train order No. 70 could be delivered to that train.

Conductor Eley entered the service as a brakeman in 1907 and was made a conductor in 1912. Flagman Cogswell was employed as a brakeman in 1910 and promoted to the position of conductor in 1912. The records of both of these men were good. They had been on duty 15 hours and 45 minutes after a period off duty of nearly 12 hours. Dispatcher Hudelson had been employed in railroad service since 1884, 15 years being as an operator and 15 years being as a dispatcher. He had been employed by several different railroads, the last six years of which had been with the Chicago Great Western Railroad.