Inv-135

June 4, 1913.

In re Investigation of Accident on the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway at Baldwin, Wis., on April 27, 1913.

On April 27, 1913, there was a head-end collision on the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway at Baldwin, Wis., which resulted in the death of 2 employees, and the injury of 6 passengers, 2 mail clerks, and 1 employee.

After investigation of this accident the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

Eastbound passenger train No. 2 consisted of 1 combination mail and baggage car, 1 baggage car, 1 smoking car, 1 chair car, 3 sleeping cars, and 1 dining car; all of wooden construction and hauled by engine No. 379. The train was in charge of Conductor Lamphear and Engineman Shute, and was en route from Minneapolis, Minn., to Chicago, Ill. It passed Roberts, 9.2 miles west of Baldwin, at 8:13 p.m., being 3 minutes late at the time. This train is due to pass Baldwin at 8:24 p.m., and when nearing that station it collided with westbound extra 240 at about 8:25 p.m., at a point about 300 feet west of the west switch, or 1,100 feet west of Baldwin station. The engineman and baggageman of the passenger train were killed in the collision. The speed of the train at the time of the collision was estimated to have been about 40 miles per hour.

Westbound extra 240 consisted of 30 cars and a caboose, all equipped with air brakes, and hauled by engine No. 240. The train was in charge of Conductor Meyers and Engineman Troy, and was en route from Altoona, Wis., to St. Paul, Minn. Coming

into Baldwin it was the intention of the crew to head in on the passing track at the east switch for the purpose of allowing train No. 2 to pass, but before the train could be stopped the engine and several cars had passed beyond the switch. After trying to back the train and being unable to do so, the engine and first 9 cars were cut off and proceeded down the main track, intending to go to the west switch, back in, and then back to the east switch and pull the balance of the train in on the siding. When the engine and 9 cars had proceeded down the main track as far as the station the conductor went in and inquired of the operator concerning the whereabouts of train No. 2, and was told that it had passed Roberts at 8:13 p.m. At this time it was about 8:20 p.m. The conductor then gave a red lantern to the head brakeman and told him to flag the passenger train, the conductor in the meantime going to the west switch for the purpose of opening it and allowing the engine and 9 cars to back in on the passing track. After waiting a minute or two to give the flagman an opportunity to proceed some distance ahead, the engineman started west and had just stopped beyond the west switch and was about to back in on the passing track when the collision occurred.

The engine and first 4 cars of train No. 2 were derailed, and the baggage car was practically destroyed, while the mail car and both engines were badly damaged. The smoking car and 2 of the freight cars were also more or less damaged. The weather at the time was dark and clear.

This part of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha

Railway is a single-track line. Train movements are authorized by time card and train orders. A positive manual block signal system is in operation. Approaching Baldwin station from the west there is about 4,250 feet of straight track, followed by a one-degree curve to the left about 700 feet in length. Then there is about 1,300 feet of straight track between the end of the curve and the station.

From their statements it appears that both Conductor Meyers and Engineman Troy thought that the head brakeman would be able to afford them ample protection while backing in on the passing track. Head Brakeman Borgen stated that when the conductor gave him the red lantern and told him to flag the passenger train he began to run as fast as he could and had reached a point just beyond the west switch, which is about 800 feet from the station, when he saw the headlight of train No. 2 approaching about one-half mile away. He continued to run toward it, giving stop signals as he did so, and had reached the beginning of the curve when he had to step off the track. Head Brakeman Borgen also stated that the engineman of the passenger train answered his signals when about a train length away. From a test made after the accident it appeared that the head brakeman succeeded in reaching a point only about 650 feet in advance of the engine. This test also showed that with an engine standing where No. 240 stood at the time of the accident its headlight could be seen a distance of about one mile by an approaching eastbound engine crew, while the signals of the flagman, who was standing at the point he claimed to have reached, could be seen a distance of

about three-quarters of a mile. Head Brakeman Borgen stated that he usually carried fusees in his pockets when flagging but had no time to get any on this occasion.

Engineman Troy stated that after the conductor sent the head brakeman ahead to flag the passenger train he waited until the brakeman had passed the west switch and then began to pull ahead slowly. After his engine had passed the switch he was looking back toward the rear in order to see the signal which would be given by the conductor when the cars had been pulled ahead far enough to back in on the siding. When pulling ahead in this manner he looked forward once or twice and saw the head brakeman about 12 car lengths in front of him. Just as the conductor signaled him to back up he glanced ahead and saw the headlight of train No. 2, at which time he also noticed the brakeman giving stop signals. At this time the passenger engine was working steam and the firebox door was open, indicating that the fireman was working on the fire. Engineman Troy at once decided that the passenger train would not be able to stop and told his fireman to get off. He then started his engine to backing up and jumped.

Fireman Patterson thought that the passenger train was about one-quarter of a mile away when he first saw its headlight, and he verified the statements of the engineman as to the firebox door being open and the engine working steam.

Conductor Meyers said that the brakeman had no fusees because it was not customary to carry them on the engine, and he did not want him to wait until they could be secured from the

caboose. The last he saw of the brakeman the latter was about at the beginning of the curve.

It appears from the testimony of employees that the block signal located at the station was set at danger before either train reached Baldwin, and when the crew of extra 240 proceeded to the west switch with the forward portion of their train they proceeded past this danger signal in direct violation of rule No. 89 of the book of rules governing the operation of trains on this road. The rule in question reads as follows:

> "At meeting points between trains of different classes, the inferior train must take siding and clear main track for the superior train at least five minutes, and must not pull by and back in except when authorized by train order to do so."

It is apparent that the crew of extra 240 did not obey any part of this rule, as they were occupying the main track within five minutes of a superior train, and also pulled ahead for the purpose of backing in without securing the necessary authority for doing so.

Under instructions issued on January 21, 1913, all engines were required to be equipped with all necessary flagging utensils before leaving the engine house. From the testimony of employees, however, it appeared that this requirement was not enforced with respect to torpedoes and fusees.

As previously stated, the engineman on train No. 2 was killed, while on account of being in a hospital seriously injured no detailed statement was secured from Fireman Page. The testimony of the other employees involved did not bring out any further information of value.

This accident was caused by extra 240 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train without proper protection, for which the conductor and engineman are responsible.

Knowing that train No. 2 did not stop at this station and that their train was already occupying the main track within five minutes of the time train No. 2 was due, the crew of the freight train should not have cut off the head portion of their train and run it down the main track until the flagman had been sent ahead and the passenger train brought to a stop.

The employees involved in this collision were experienced men. Engineman Troy had had less than five months' experience on this road, previous to which, however, he had been employed as an engineman on another railroad for six years. The records of these men were good, and none had been on duty in violation of any of the provisions of the hours of service law.