

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
DENVER & RIO GRANDE RAILROAD AT GRIZZLY, COLO., ON
JULY 19, 1921

Dept. of Transportation

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On July 19, 1921, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad at Grizzly, Colo., which resulted in the death of 1 employee, and the injury of 2 passengers and 6 employees. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

Location and method of operation

The Second District of the Second Division, on which this accident occurred, extends between Minturn and Glenwood, Colo., a distance of 58 1/3 miles, and is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no form of block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred at a point about 1,000 feet west of the east passing-track switch at Grizzly, which is a non-telegraph station. Approaching from the east, beginning at the switch, there is about 350 feet of tangent, followed by an 8-degree curve to the left 663 feet in length, the accident occurred on this curve about 200 feet from its western end. Approaching from the west there is about 1,000 feet of tangent, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.75 per cent descending for westbound trains. The view of the engine crews of trains approaching the point of accident from either direction is considerably obscured by shrubbery on the

inside of the curve. It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred at about 9 07 or 9 08 a. m

Description.

Westbound freight train No 65 consisted of 75 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 1120, and was in charge of Conductor Eldridge and Engineer Simonson. At Eagle, 26.23 miles east of Grizzly, the crew received a copy of train order No 10, reading as follows:

"Number three run six hours thirty-five minutes late, and No 15 run three hours fifty minutes late, Minurn to Glenwood No. two, engine 782, run two hours forty minutes late Glenwood to Minurn.",

Under the time-table schedule, train No. 2 leaves Glenwood at 6 26 a.m., and Grizzly at 6 37 a.m. Train No 65 left Shoshone, 4 71 miles from Grizzly, at 8 50 a. m., with no other orders concerning train No 2, and arrived at the east switch at Grizzly at about 9 05 a. m., 12 minutes before train No 2 was due under train order No. 10. When the train was brought to a stop, the engine stood slightly over the switch points, which were lined for the main track. As the crew knew they could not back the train enough to clear the switch points, it was decided to uncouple the engine, proceed to the west switch, back through the passing track, and pull the train in on the passing track. The engine was uncoupled and was proceeding toward the west switch when it collided with train No 2.

Eastbound passenger train No. 2 consisted of 1 baggage car, 2 coaches, 7 Pullman sleeping cars, 1 tourist car, and 1

dining car, in the order named, hauled by engines 782 and 786, and was in charge of Conductor Gilmore and Enginemen Trechter and King. It left Glenwood, the first station west of Grizzly, and 4.88 miles distant therefrom, at 8.55 a. m., with a copy of train order No. 15, reading as follows:

"Order No. 10 is annulled. Number two, engine 782, wait at Grizzly until 9.17 a. m. for No. 65, engine 1120, and run two hours and twenty minutes late Glenwood to Minturn",

Train No. 2 was running at a speed of about 10 miles an hour, with the brakes applied prepared to stop clear of the east passing-track switch, for the purpose of waiting at that point until 9.17 a. m., when it collided with engine 1120.

Engine 1120 was derailed and driven back a distance of about 50 feet, but remained in an upright position. Engine 782 also remained upright, although it was derailed and quite badly damaged. Very slight damage was sustained by engine 786 and the cars in the passenger train. The employee killed was the fireman of engine 1120.

Summary of evidence.

On account of injuries and absence from the city, it was impossible to obtain statements from all of the employees of the crews involved, but sufficient information was obtained, coupled with observation of the physical conditions, to indicate that neither engine crew was aware of the approach of the opposing train until just before the accident occurred. Under the train orders held by them, the crew of train No. 65 supposed

that train No 2 was running 2 hours and 40 minutes late and, therefore, would not be due to depart from Glenwood until 9.06 a. m., and from Grizzly until 9.17 a. m., and that under rule 89 they had until 9 12 a. m., to move their train into clear at Grizzly Rule 89 reads as follows:

"At meeting points between trains of different classes the inferior train must take the siding and clear the superior train at least five minutes, and must pull into the siding when practicable. If necessary to back in, the train must first be protected as prescribed by Rule 99, unless otherwise provided "

The crew of train No. 2, having received train order No. 15, were not obliged to remain at Glenwood until 9.06 a. m., but could proceed at any time after 8.46 a. m., waiting at the east switch at Grizzly until 9.17 a. m. for train No 65. At the time the accident occurred, therefore, both trains under the orders they held had a right at the section of main track, between the two passing-track switches, on which the accident occurred.

Chief Dispatcher Wightman was on duty at the time the accident occurred and issued the train orders involved; his jurisdiction on this district begins at Glenwood Mr Wightman said that train No. 2 arrived at Glenwood 8 minutes ahead of the time at which it was expected to arrive He ascertained from the operator at Snosnone that train No. 65 was approaching that station and as he said he was certain train No 65 could not go farther than Grizzly for train No 2, he felt safe in annulling train order No 10 and in issuing train order No. 15 to train No. 2 without stopping train No.

65 at Shoshone for the purpose of giving them a copy of the order. His idea in changing the orders was to enable train No. 2 to save time by leaving Glenwood immediately, and have it in position to leave Grizzly promptly on the arrival of train No. 65 at that point.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the failure of Chief Dispatcher Wightman to issue to the crew of train No. 65 a copy of train order No. 15, resulting in both trains having equal right to the main track between the passing-track switches.

Train order No. 15 was made complete to the crew of train No. 2 at 8 47 a. m., whereas train No. 65 did not pass Shoshone, according to the train sheet, until 8 51 a. m. There was ample time to have issued train order No. 15 to train No. 65 at Shoshone, and had Dispatcher Wightman done so, train No. 65 would have had no right to the main track west of the east switch at Grizzly without flag protection, and under these circumstances it is probable that the accident would not have occurred.

Chief Dispatcher Wightman was employed as an agent and operator in 1905, promoted to dispatcher in 1907 and to chief dispatcher in 1917. He had had more than 4 years' previous experience as an agent and operator on the Illinois Central and Union Pacific Railroads. At the time of the accident he had been on duty a little more than 1 hour. The crew of

train No 2 had been on duty less than 4 hours and the crew on train No. 65 about 6-1/2 hours, previous to which they had been off duty 13 or more hours.