No. 118

March 19, 1913.

In re investigation of accident on the Great Northern Railway at St. Paul, Minn., December 10, 1912.

On December 10, 1912, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Great Northern Railway, at St. Paul, Minn., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

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

That part of the Great Northern Railway on which this accident occurred is a four-track road running east and west. The two north tracks are used for passenger service and are equipped with automatic block signals. The two south tracks are used for freight service and no block signals are installed on these tracks. The accident occurred within the limits of the St. Paul freight yard. From Hamline Junction, which is about a mile west of where the collision occurred, to the point of the accident the track is straight, the view is unobstructed and there is a grade of about 0.06% descending toward the east.

Eastbound freight train extra 1518, consisting of an engine and a caboose, left Minnesota Transfer at nine o'clock on the night of the accident. Conductor Patnode and Engineman O'Neil were in charge of this train. At 9:15 p.m., this train was stopped near Lexington Avenue, St. Paul, on account of a blockade on the eastbound freight track, and while standing there it was struck by freight train No. 996 at 10:35 p. m.

Freight train No. 996 consisted of an engine, five cars and a caboose, and Conductor Andrews and Engineman Farnon were in charge of this train. No. 996 left Minnesota Transfer at about 10:13 p.m. The speed of the train between Minnesota Transfer and Hamline Junction was approximately 10 miles per hour and on the grade east of Hamline Junction the speed was increased to about 15 miles per hour. Engineman Farnon stated that just before reaching the point where the accident occurred a westbound train on an adjoining passenger track approached and the glare from the electric headlight with which this train was equipped blinded him so that he did not see the rear end of the caboose of extra 1518 until he was within about 15 car lengths of it; he then saw the rear lights and the flagman on the ground near the caboose, and immediately applied the brakes in emergency and then jumped from the engine. He estimated the speed of the train at about 8 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

On the night of the accident the weather was clear and cold. The rear lights on the caboose of extra 1518 were burning brightly

just before the collision.

Conductor Andrews of train No. 936 stated that there were five cars in his train and that the air brakes were cut in and working properly.

The rules of the Great Northern Railway require that "all except first class trains must approach and pass through yard limits under full control, expecting to find main track occupied." This rule is understood by employees to mean that enginemen of all except first class trains must be prepared to stop within the range of vision, and to relieve them of the duty of protecting their trains against following trains.

This accident was caused by failure of Engineman Farnon to observe this rule. When the train on the adjoining track approached and the glare from the electric headlight obscured Engineman Farnon's view of the track ahead, under this rule he should have reduced speed or brought his train to a stop until the headlight had passed him and he could again see the track ahead of his train. Engineman Farnon had been running an engine on this division from time to time during the past five years and said that he had been examined on the rules and was familiar with the rule regarding speed restriction within yard limits. None of the employees involved in this accident was on duty contrary to any of the provisions of the Hours of Service Act.