

June 26, 1912.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE
KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN RAILROAD.
June 3rd, 1912.

Inv-64

On June 4, 1912, the Kansas City Southern Railroad Company reported by telegraph a derailment which occurred at Blanchard, La., on June 3rd, resulting in the death of three and the injury of two persons. After investigation the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

The Kansas City Southern Railroad is a single track line, without block signals, trains being operated under the train order system.

North-bound extra train No. 513, consisting of engine No. 513, 36 loaded and 37 empty cars and a caboose, departed from Shreveport, La. at 6 A.M. June 3rd, in charge of conductor Crabtree and engineman Smith. Just after passing Blanchard, a station 10 miles north of Shreveport, while running at a speed of about 10 miles per hour, the air hose parted between two empty tank cars, which were the 15th and 16th cars behind the engine. When this hose parted an emergency application of the power brakes was made, causing the slack to bunch from the rear end of the train, which was composed largely of heavy loads, and totally demolishing an empty coal car located 39 cars behind the engine, as well as derailing two loaded cars between which the empty coal car was located. All the persons killed and injured

were trespassers who were riding in this empty car, which was an old wooden car of light construction.

This accident was caused by defective draft rigging on the two cars between which the air hose parted. There was evidently a failure to properly inspect and repair these cars, as their condition was plainly apparent. They should not have been permitted to leave Shreveport in their defective condition. Investigations showed that when these two cars were placed in a train and subjected to approximately the same pulling stress exerted at the time of the accident the center line of one coupler was found to be only 30 1/2 inches above the rail and pulled out 6 1/4 inches from the buffer block; and rear end of draft timbers dropped down 2 1/2 inches. The coupler on the next car pulled out 5 1/2 inches from the buffer block and rear end of draft timbers dropped down 1 3/4 inches. Two draft bolts were missing and the rear end of draft timbers were badly burred by striking against transoms.

This investigation further developed that the present practice in testing air brakes at Shreveport is inefficient. There is a yard pipe line, but no air gauge is used by inspectors in charging the train line. After the train is supposed to be fully charged the inspector disconnects the yard pipe line and applies the brakes by opening an angle cock without any knowledge as to the train line pressure.

Extra No. 513 left Shreveport on the date of the derailment without having the required train line pressure of 70 lbs., and although this engine was equipped with an eleven inch pump engineer Smith stated that he was unable to secure the required pressure at any time previous to the derailment.

The derailed cars broke down the telegraph line, cutting off telegraphic communication between Blanchard and the dispatcher's office at Texarkana, and in order to report the accident it became necessary for conductor Crabtree to call the Texarkana office over the commercial long distance telephone. After reporting the accident conductor Crabtree suggested to trainmaster Mills that south-bound trains Nos. 1 and 51 be held at Mooringsport, the first station north of Blanchard, until he heard from him. Trainmaster Mills replied, "I will hold No. 1 and 51 at Mooringsport until I hear from you." This conversation was heard by agent White at Blanchard and by dispatcher Adams at Texarkana. Immediately after this conversation trainmaster Mills instructed dispatcher Adams to hold Nos. 1 and 51 at Mooringsport until he heard from conductor Crabtree, and before leaving Texarkana on No. 1, a short time after the conversation, he again said to the dispatcher that conductor Crabtree wanted him to hold Nos. 1 and 51 at Mooringsport until he heard from him, and asked him if he understood this.

After this telephone conversation with the trainmaster conductor Crabtree returned to the scene of the wreck and assisted in removing the killed and injured and clearing the track. At about 9:45 A.M. agent White at Blanchard, upon information furnished by conductor Proud of train No. 6 and without hearing from conductor Crabtree, notified dispatcher Adams that the main line would probably be clear at 10:15 A.M. At about 10:45 A.M. conductor Crabtree suggested to engineman Smith that they take the head end of the train to Mooringsport, set it out, take water, and return to Blanchard and arrange to let Nos. 1, 51 and 4 pass, stating to engineman Smith that he had arranged with trainmaster Mills to hold everything at Mooringsport until he heard from him. On this understanding they started for Mooringsport at about 11:05 A.M. with the head end of their train, consisting of 35 cars, and collided head on with passenger train No. 1 about 4 miles south of Mooringsport. In this collision 12 passengers on train No. 1 were injured.

South-bound train No. 1, consisting of engine 337, one mail and express car, one baggage car, one day coach, one chair car and one Pullman sleeper, left Texarkana at 8:50 A.M. and arrived at Mooringsport on time at 10:44 A.M. Trainmaster Mills was on this train. At Mooringsport the conductor and engineman of train No. 1 received order No. 15 directing trains Nos. 1 and 4 to meet at Blanchard. This order was made complete at 10:53 A.M., and train No. 1 departed for Mooringsport at 10:55 A.M. In addition to

order No. 15 the conductor and engineman of this train had telegraphic instructions to approach Blanchard carefully expecting to find the main track blocked. When order No. 15 was given to train No. 1 at Mooringsport trainmaster Mills called dispatcher Adams at Texarkana and asked "Have you heard from Blanchard?" The dispatcher replied that he had, and that they expected to have the main line clear at 10:15.

The collision occurred on a slightly descending grade to the north at the beginning of a 1 1/2 degree curve in about a 30 foot cut. The crew of extra 513 saw the smoke from the engine of train No. 1 sometime before the collision, and engineman Smith applied the brakes in the emergency and had brought his train nearly to a stop when the trains met. On account of the cut and the curve the engineman of train No. 1 did not see extra 513 until they were about 400 feet apart. The estimated speed of extra No. 513 at the time of the collision was 4 to 6 miles per hour, and that of train No. 1 about 10 or 12 miles per hour. The derailment was caused by the handling of defective equipment in train extra 513 that could and should have been discovered by proper inspection.

The collision was caused by the failure of the conductor and engineman of extra No. 513 to obey the rules of the Kansas City Southern Railway which required them to clear the time of superior class trains 5 minutes, and in the event of their failure to do so to properly protect their train by flagging. They seek to justify their failure to obey these rules by relying on the telephone conversa-

tion between conductor Crabtree and trainmaster Mills; but Rule No. 103 of the Kansas City Southern Railway provides that all messages or orders affecting the movement of trains must be in writing, and conductor Crabtree's verbal understanding with the trainmaster did not justify the violation of this rule.

It appears that the break in the telegraph line had been repaired some time prior to the departure of extra 513 from Blanchard for Mooringsport, and had conductor Crabtree gone to the office and asked for orders before departing for Mooringsport on the time of train No. 1, the collision would have been avoided. Trainmaster Mills is at fault for not inquiring of dispatcher Adams when talking with him over the telephone at Mooringsport whether or not he had heard from conductor Crabtree; and dispatcher Adams is at fault for putting out order No. 15 at Mooringsport for Nos. 1 and 4 to meet at Blanchard without first hearing from conductor Crabtree and advising him that No. 1 was released at Mooringsport, as he had been instructed by trainmaster Mills. Agent White at Blanchard is at fault for notifying dispatcher Adams that the track would be clear about 10:15 without having definite knowledge about the matter from conductor Crabtree; especially in view of the fact that he heard the telephone conversation between the trainmaster and the conductor and knew that extra 513 was working at the place of derailment between Blanchard and Mooringsport, and on account of the understanding with trainmaster Mills, very likely without flagging protection.

None of the employees at fault were on duty to exceed 5 hours and 30 minutes, and all were experienced men with good records.