

June 17, 1913.

In re Investigation of Accident on the Lake Erie  
& Western Railway, May 19, 1913.

On May 19, 1913, there was a head end collision between two P. C. C. & St. L. freight trains near Indianapolis, Ind., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

This collision occurred on the Indiana & Michigan City Division of the Lake Erie & Western Railway, just outside the city limits of Indianapolis, about 400 feet north of 34th street crossing, and 500 or 600 feet outside of yard limits. At this point the Lake Erie & Western Railway is a single track line, operated by the manual block system. P.C.C. & St. L. trains are operated over this line between Belt Junction, Indianapolis, and Kokomo Junction, a distance of 51.8 miles. When using this track P. C. C. & St. L. trains are governed by the rules and regulations of the Lake Erie and Western Railway and the employees in charge of such trains are subject to the rules and required to pass the examination of the Lake Erie & Western Railway.

The trains involved in this collision were northbound first No. 86, consisting of engine 8231, twenty loaded and four empty cars and a caboose, with Conductor Frazier and Engineman Cowgill in charge; and south-bound first No. 85, consisting of engine 8468, three cars and a caboose, with Conductor Gladden and Engineman Ross in charge.

At the point where the accident occurred there is a one-degree curve about three-quarters of a mile long, the inside of the curve being toward the east, and there is a slight descending grade toward the south. The speed of first No. 86 at the time of the collision was about 20 or 25 miles per hour, and of first No. 85 about 10 or 12 miles per hour. The view was obstructed by trees on the inside of the curve and it was impossible for either crew to see the approach of the other train until the trains were only a short distance apart. There were no speed restrictions in effect at the point where the collision occurred. At the time of the accident the weather was clear.

At Belt Junction first No. 86 received order No. 19, reading as follows:

Eng. 8231 will display signals and run as first let  
eighty-six 86 will meet first let eight-five 85 eng.  
8468 at Malott Park. Meet second 2nd eight-five 85  
eng. 8291 at Castleton. Meet extra fifty-five thirteen  
5513 south at Noblesville. 1st 86 get this at Malott  
Park, ex 5513 at Noblesville.

First No. 86 left Belt Junction at 5:06 a.m., and had gone a distance of only about one mile when the collision occurred.

First No. 85 left Kokomo Junction at 4:22 a.m., having received at that point order No. 12, directing it to run as first No. 88 and giving it right over second and third 88 from Kokomo Junction to Noblesville, 88 to get this order at Noblesville. At Noblesville, however, first 85 was given order No. 17, giving first, second and third 85 right over 86 from Tipton to Belt Junction and fixing a meeting between first 85 and third 88 at Castleton, third No. 88 to get this order at Castleton.

Train order No. 19 was received by Operator Lighty at Malott Park and repeated by him to the dispatcher who gave his O. K. at 5:06 a. m. The operator's "SD", notifying the dispatcher that the stop signal was displayed, was also given. The rules in force on this road require that a fixed signal must be used at each train order office which shall indicate stop when trains are to be stopped for orders, and the rules governing the operation of the telegraph block system require in addition that the operator will display a red flag by day and a red lantern by night as a notice that the conductor is wanted for orders.

Operator Lighty stated that he displayed the stop signal but admitted that he failed to display a red flag as required by the rules; he stated that he had mislaid the flag but found it just as the train passed.

The last order involving No. 86 which was received by No. 85 was order No. 17 giving it right over No. 86 from Tipton to Belt Junction. The crew of this train had no knowledge of train order No. 19 fixing a meeting point between first No. 85 and first No. 86 at Malott Park.

The engineman and fireman of first No. 85 stated that when their train approached Malott Park they first saw the block signal in the stop position but when the whistle was sounded for the signal it was thrown to the clear position. The conductor and two brakemen of this train, who were riding in the caboose, stated that the block signal was clear when the train passed. Before this train left Castleton the operator at that point had told the conductor that the dispatcher might have an order for his train at Malott Park and the conductor was watching closely as he approached that station, expecting to be stopped, but as the signal was cleared the train proceeded.

According to the statements of two sectionmen who were 200 or 300 feet from the block signal when this train passed,

the signal was thrown to the stop position after the train had passed and the operator ran out of the office waving a red flag and calling out to stop the train.

Operator Lighty had been in the employ of the Lake Erie & Western Railway only three days. His application for employment on that road showed that he had had about three years' experience on other roads as an operator but for the past five or six years he had not been engaged in railroad work. He was examined and given instructions regarding his duties by the chief dispatcher of the Lake Erie & Western Railway and considered by him competent to be placed in charge of an office, although the chief dispatcher had not at that time received a response to his request for information regarding this operator's previous experience from the roads on which he had been employed.

This accident was caused by failure of the operator at Malott Park to stop first No. 85 and deliver order No. 10 fixing a meeting point for that train at that station.

None of the employees involved in this accident was on duty contrary to the provisions of the hours of service law.