

**IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILROAD NEAR DALLAS CENTER,
IOWA, ON DECEMBER 13, 1918.**

January 27, 1919.

On December 13, 1918, there was a head-and collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad near Dallas Center, Iowa, which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 2 passengers and 7 employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety submits the following report:

The Fort Dodge-Des Moines subdivision of the Central Division of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad, on which this accident occurred, extends between Fort Dodge and Des Moines, Iowa, a distance of 88.3 miles. It is a single-track line upon which train movements are governed by schedule and train orders transmitted by telegraph, no block signal system being in use.

Eastbound freight train No. 88 consisted of engine 479, 30 loaded and 7 empty cars, and was in charge of Conductor Field and Engineer Veale. It left Fort Dodge at 11.15 p.m., December 12th, left Parry, the last open telegraph office before reaching the point of accident, at 6.50 a.m., December 13th, passed Dallas Center at about 7.35 a.m., and was attempting to back in on the passing track at the east passing track switch when it was struck by train No. 1 at about 8 a.m.

Westbound passenger train No. 1 consisted of engine 212, 1 combination mail and baggage car, 1 baggage car, 1 smoke-

ing car and 1 chair car, in the order named, and was in charge of Conductor Thomas and Engineer Taff. It left Des Moines at 7.15 a.m., left Waukes, the last open telegraph office before reaching the point of accident and 14.7 miles west of Des Moines, at 7.40 a.m., and collided head-on with train No. 88 at a point about 5 miles beyond Waukes, or about 1 mile east of Dallas Center, while running at a speed estimated to have been 25 miles an hour.

Engineer Taff of train No. 1 was killed. The front ends of both locomotives were considerably damaged but remained upright with locomotive 213 derailed. On train No. 1 the tender telescoped the baggage car its entire length and the mail car about ten feet. The head car on train No. 88 was demolished and the second car badly damaged, both cars lying on the right hand side of the track.

At the point of accident the track is straight in either direction for a distance of about two miles. Approaching that point from the direction of train No. 1 the track is practically level until within about 1,000 feet of the point of accident, and for the remainder of the distance there is an ascending grade of about 0.59%. From the opposite direction the track is practically level until within about 3,680 feet of the point of accident, and is then on a descending grade of about 1%. The weather at the time was very foggy which restricted the range of vision of both engineers to a distance of approximately 300 feet.

Conductor Field of train No. 88 stated that as his train approached Dallas Center he was working on his reports and did not realize that it had reached that station until he heard the noise as it passed some of the buildings. He then stepped out on the platform to see the position of the train order signal, thinking that those on the engine had received orders giving additional time on train No. 1, but when he saw that the signal was clear and knowing that the engineer had not received any orders there, he looked at his watch and it showed 7.40 a.m. Realizing that his train should not proceed further he applied the air brakes from the rear of the train and brought the train to a stop with its rear end from one-fourth to one-half mile east of the east switch at Dallas Center. He said that he and Brakeman Jones got down on the ground and on account of being unable to see the head end of the train because of the fog he sent the brakeman ahead to relay his signals to the engineer. The engineer then tried to back the train from where it had stopped, but finding that impossible, the train was pulled ahead about a train length in an effort to find more favorable grade conditions. Finding it impossible to back the train he walked to the station at Dallas Center, hoping to get in communication with train No. 1 before it left Waukeo, but found that it had left there. The accident occurred before he had time to return to his train.

Rear Brakeman Jones of train No. 88 stated that as his train approached Dallas Center the engineer sounded the station whistle and he gave the engineer a hand signal to proceed.

When he told Conductor Field that he had given the engineman a proceed signal the conductor replied that, "He hasn't time to go", and both looked at their watches and saw that it was 7.40 a.m. He and the conductor went out on the platform of the engine and the conductor applied the air brakes. When the train came to a stop he walked to the middle of the train and met Engineman Veale who asked him what the trouble was. Brakeman Jones said that he replied, "Where do you figure you are going for No. 1", and Engineman Veale replied, "I had plenty of time." The engineman then returned to the head end of the train and attempted to back the train to Dallas Center without success.

Engineman Veale of train No. 86 stated that his train made no stops after leaving Perry until it was stopped east of the east switch at Dallas Center. As he neared Dallas Center he looked at his watch and saw that it was 7.52 a.m., and on account of the fog he did not know that he was so close to Dallas Center until he reached the water tank, located about 500 feet east of the east switch. He said he then applied the air brakes, but the train was not stopped until it was half over the east switch. He said that he and the head brakeman immediately got off the engine, walked back toward the rear of the train, and met the rear brakeman who asked him where he was going for No. 1. Engineman Veale said that he replied, "Right here." Sometime before reaching Dallas Center he asked the fireman what time it was, but does not recall what the fireman told him, but said he remarked to the fire-

man that it was too short time to go to Waukegan for No. 1. He denied telling the fireman when approaching Dallas Center "to get her hot" as he was going to Waukegan for No. 1. He said he had not overlooked train No. 1 and intended to meet that train at Dallas Center. He said that he and the brakeman returned to the head end of the train, that he sent the brakeman ahead to flag train No. 1 while he tried to back the train to Dallas Center. Being unable to back the train, it was standing there when he saw train No. 1 approaching about three telegraph poles away, and the collision occurred shortly thereafter. He said that the headlights on both trains were burning at the time. He said that he told the flagman to take all flagging material with him and about two minutes after he had left the engine he saw a lighted fusee ahead.

Fireman Nelson of train No. 88 stated that when his train was about a mile and a half west of Dallas Center, Engineer Veale asked him what time it was and he told him 7.35 a.m. The engineer told him "to keep her hot" as he was going to Waukegan for No. 1. When the train stopped the engineer and head brakeman went back toward the rear and when they returned to the engine the brakeman went ahead to flag. He saw the brakeman with a lighted fusee when he had reached a point six or seven car lengths away from the train. He said he told the brakeman that there were torpedoes in his toolbox.

Head Brakeman Truesdell of train No. 88 stated that when his train stopped east of Dallas Center, he and Engineer Veale got off and walked back toward the rear of the train,

meeting the rear brakeman about ten or twelve cars from the head end. The rear brakeman asked Engineman Veale where he was trying to go for No. 1 and the engineman replied, "I had time to go to Waukegan," that he had had twenty minutes, but now he had only twelve minutes and must back in on the siding. He then looked at his watch and it was 7.33 a.m. He and the engineman returned to the engine. He said he looked hurriedly in the fireman's cabinet for torpedoes and fuses, but found none, but in the flag box he found one fuse and a red flag and took them and a white lantern and went forward to flag. When he heard train No. 1 approaching he lighted the fuse, kept going and swinging the fuse, and when the train was getting close, he stuck the fuse into a tie in the middle of the track and stepped off the track on the engineman's side, but continued to give stop signals with the flag. He said his signals were not heeded by the engineman of train No. 1, that he saw no one on the engine, and that the engine was working steam when it passed him. He said the fuse was burning when he set it down on the track, but he does not know whether it was burning when train No. 1 passed it. He said he did not have time to secure a red lantern or torpedoes before going out to flag.

Conductor Strenze of train No. 1 stated that he was in the smoking car when the collision occurred. As soon as he got off the train he looked for his flagman and found him injured and unable to go back and flag; a passenger, whose name he did not secure, went back and flagged for him. Later the

volunteer flagman told him that when he went back to flag he found the flagman of train No. 88 with a red flag, and the stub of a burned fusee was sticking in one of the ties. Conductor Strouse estimated the speed of his train at about 35 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

Fireman Dunning of train No. 1 stated that his train was running at a speed of about 40 miles an hour when both he and the engineer saw a headlight ahead, and he jumped off the engine while the engineer was applying the air brakes, the speed of the train being reduced to about 35 miles an hour at the time of the collision. He saw the headlight on the locomotive of train No. 1 was burning, and thought the arc light was being used, but the fog greatly obscured their range of vision. Both he and Engineer Taff had been leaning out of the cab windows keeping a close lookout ahead, but he did not see the flagman of train No. 88.

Agent Beard at Dallas Center stated that train No. 88 had passed the station at Dallas Center at 7.35 a.m., a short time before he went on duty and opened the office for business.

Assistant Superintendent Howie stated that he reached the scene of accident at about 2 p.m., immediately inspected engine 470 of train No. 88, and found 8 torpedoes and 2 red fusees in the fireman's mailbox.

This accident was caused by train No. 88 occupying the main track on the line of a superior train without authority and without proper flag protection.

While there is some conflict in the testimony as to the time train No. 88 passed Dallas Center, it is believed that it passed there at about 7.35 or 7.40 a.m. Engineer Veale claimed that he had not overlooked train No. 1 and intended to wait for it at Dallas Center, and that he applied the air brakes in an effort to bring his train to a stop before passing the station. The testimony of Fireman Nelson and Brakeman Johnson and Truesdell is directly to the contrary and indicates that he intended to proceed to Waukegan without stopping at Dallas Center. Assuming that he intended to wait for train No. 1 at Dallas Center, he should have so operated his train as to be able to bring it to a stop before passing the station, and his failure to do so was the primary cause of the accident.

Rule No. 99 of the operating rules of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad provides that:

When a train stops or is delayed, under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with stop signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection. When recalled he may return to his train, first placing two torpedoes on the rail when conditions require it and using fuses when necessary.

The front of the train must be protected in the same way, when necessary, by the front brakeman or fireman.

When train No. 88 came to a stop Brakeman Truesdell went toward the rear of the train with Engineer Veale without taking measures to protect the head end of his train. When he returned to the engine he was unable to find any torpedoes and found only one fuse, and went out to flag with a red flag, fuses

and white lantern. An examination of the fireman's seatbox after the accident revealed a sufficient number of fuses and torpedoes for flagging purposes which Brakenham Truesdell overlooked in his haste. In view of the heavy fog prevailing at the time he should have taken all precautions to enable him to flag train No. 1, and had he put down torpedoes and carried a burning fuse, it is likely that the engineers of train No. 1 would have been warned in time to have averted the collision.

The failure of both Engineer Taff and his fireman to see the lighted fuses which Brakenham Truesdell claims to have placed on the track, cannot be explained.

All the employees involved in this accident were experienced men, except Brakenham Truesdell, who was employed on September 23, 1916, and all had good records. At the time of the accident the crew of train No. 1 had been on duty about 1 hour and 30 minutes and the crew of train No. 80 about 2 hours and 30 minutes.

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