

In re Investigation of Accident on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway at Adams, N. D., on September 6, 1913.

On September 6, 1913, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway at Adams, N. D., resulting in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 2 employees.

After investigation of this accident and the circumstances connected therewith, the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

The fourth district of the Winnipeg division of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway, on which this accident occurred, is a single-track line extending between Overly and Adams, N. D., a distance of 101 miles. Trains are operated by the train-order system, no block signals being used. The trains involved in this collision were regular eastbound freight train No. 60 and eastbound freight train extra 808.

Train No. 60 in charge of Conductor Gallant and Engineman Lofimore, left Overly at 8:05 a.m., September 5th, one hour and five minutes behind its scheduled leaving time. It was hauled by engine No. 148 and consisted of 30 loaded and 2 empty freight cars and a caboose when it left Overly. This train was delayed en route doing station work and picking up and setting off cars, and did not arrive at Adams, its objective terminal, until about 10:20 p.m., September 5th, nearly seven hours late, the train at that time consisting of 25 loads, 2 empties and a caboose.

Upon arrival at Adams, train No. 60 stopped on main track with caboose about ten car lengths west of Depot. Head Brakeman Develing got off the engine as it passed the telegraph office and asked operator Dalton if there was a clear track in the yard. Upon being informed by the operator that tracks No. 1 and No. 2 were clear, brakeman Develing threw the switch to permit his train to pull into the yard, but received a signal from the rear end of the train to cut engine off and go to engine house, leaving train stand on main line, which was done. Conductor Gallant and his three brakemen then went to the caboose and went to bed, leaving their train standing on the main track without any protection against following trains except the marker lights on the rear end of the caboose. The reason for leaving this train standing on main track was that upon arrival at Adams the crew had been on duty 12 hours and 50 minutes, namely, from 8:05 a.m. until 10:20 p.m., and Conductor Gallant did not consider that he had time to put his train away within the 12-hour limit of service permitted by law.

At about 12:50 a.m., September 6th, train extra 808, while approaching the station at Adams, collided with the rear end

of train No. 60, instantly killing Conductor Gallant and Brakeman Fashant, and seriously injuring Brakeman Fry and Develing, all four of whom were asleep in the caboose of train No. 60 at the time. The caboose and rear box car on train No. 60 were demolished and two other cars were derailed and turned over. The front end of engine No. 808 was considerably damaged.

Extra 303, in charge of Conductor Michaels and Engineman Crick, left Adams light at 4:25 p.m. on September 5th, with orders to run extra from Adams to Egeland and return to Adams. Egeland is a junction point 52 miles west of Adams, where extra No. 303 was to pick up a train of east-bound cars and move them to Adams. On its westbound trip extra 303 met train No. 60 at Callie, a station 44 miles west of Adams, and Conductor Gallant and Engineman Larimore had a copy of the order given to extra 304 and knew that that train was to return to Adams from Egeland. Upon arrival at Egeland extra 303 turned and after picking up a train consisting of 30 loads and 6 empties returned eastward to Adams, leaving Egeland at about 3:25 p.m. The crew of extra 303 did not communicate with the train dispatcher before leaving Egeland, as there was no night telegraph operator on duty at that place nor were there any telegraph offices open at night on the entire division between Adams and Overly, a distance of 101 miles. Neither was there any train register kept at Egeland, although it is a junction point where a branch line diverges from the main line.

Approaching Adams from the west the track is level and straight for a distance of one mile and the view is unobstructed for that distance. On the night of the collision the sky was cloudy and it was very dark. No lights were used on main track switches at Adams, nor elsewhere on this division of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway. At the time of the collision the caboose of train No. 60 was standing about 1,200 feet east of the yard limit board at the west end of Adams yard.

Engineman Crick of extra 303 stated that on approaching Adams he shut off steam at the mile board west of the station and drifted in with the intention of stopping his engine at the west end of the station platform. When his engine reached the yard limit board the speed of his train had been reduced to about 12 miles per hour. He then made a brake application which reduced the speed of his train to about 6 miles per hour, and when his engine struck the rear end of train No. 60 the speed of his train was about 6 miles per hour. Engine No. 808 was equipped with an ordinary oil burning headlight, and Engineman Crick did not see the rear end of train No. 60 until his headlight showed on the caboose only a short distance away. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes but his train was too close to avoid the collision. Engineman Crick stated that there was but one red light burning on the rear of the caboose of train No. 60 and as it was on the left

hand side of the caboose almost directly in line with the order board at the station he took it for the order-board light. He further said that the order-board light was badly smoked so that it could not be seen at a greater distance away than 10 or 15 car lengths else he would have seen two lights instead of one.

Brakemen Develing and Fry of train No. 60, who were injured in the collision, both stated that they looked at the markers before going to bed and found them burning brightly on both sides of the caboose and at that time there was also a brightly burning red lantern standing on the rear platform of the caboose. Brakeman Fry also stated that he accompanied Conductor Gallant to the caboose from the head end of the train and when they arrived at the caboose Conductor Gallant asked Rear Brakeman Fashant about the markers. Brakeman Fashant replied "They are O.K. I just got through filling them and lighting them and putting them out again so I would be sure that they would burn all right."

Fireman Smith of extra 300 stated that as his train approached Adams he was sitting on the fireman's seatbox on left hand side of engine with front window of cab open, watching for the train-order signal light. He saw a red light about the time that engine man Crick whistled for the station, which he took to be the train-order signal light, and did not discover that it was the marker on a caboose until Engine man Crick called to him to jump at which time he saw the caboose only about two car lengths ahead of his engine. At no time did he see but one red light, which was the marker on the left hand side of the caboose, and he stated positively that there was only one red light burning on the rear end of train No. 60.

Head Brakeman Mattleson also stated that he saw but one red light on the left hand side of the caboose. He could not say whether the marker on the right hand side of the caboose was lighted or not; if it was he did not notice it. By measurements taken in the course of this investigation it was determined that the station order-board light at Adams is located 11 feet above the level of the ground while the height of a caboose marker is 10½ feet. These measurements tend to confirm the statement of Engine man Crick that the caboose marker was in line of vision of the station order-board, as the left hand marker and the order-board were both on the north side of the track.

Operator Dalton, who was on duty at Adams on the night of the collision, stated that train No. 60 arrived at Adams at 10:20 p.m. and tied up at 10:53. Conductor Gallant came into the office and registered and said that his train was tied up on main line on account of time being up. Operator Dalton said that he at once called the dispatcher and told him that train No. 60 was tied up on main line at his station and the dispatcher answered O.K. Operator Dalton further stated that when he reported No. 60 he reminded the dispatcher that train No. 60 was tied up on main line and again received the dispatcher's O.K.

Dispatcher Rowan, who was on duty at the time train No. 60 arrived at Adams, stated that his office received a report from the operator at Adams about train No. 60 being tied up on main line, and when this was called to his attention he replied O.K. About 11:15 p.m. he asked the operator at Adams for report of train No. 60. The operator gave it to him but said nothing about No. 60 being on main line. The dispatcher further said that nothing was done by him about protecting No. 60 because when a train tied up on main line at any station it was customary for the conductor to ask for protection, and if it was possible to give it to him he received a message or order that his train would be protected on main line. When this was not asked for it was understood that the train was fully protected. In this case the dispatcher stated that he could not have protected train No. 60 by train order on account of there being no night offices on the division, thus making it impossible to communicate with the crew of extra 308. It developed at the investigation, however, that Dispatcher Rowan made no inquiry of the operator at Adams as to whether or not train No. 60 was protected, and did nothing to provide protection for that train. Dispatcher Rowan went off duty at midnight and in making transfer of train orders, etc., to the dispatcher who succeeded him he said nothing about train No. 60 being tied up on main track at Adams without protection by message or train order.

The direct cause of this accident was the absolute failure of Conductor Gallant of train No. 60 to protect his train. It is impossible to understand why the conductor of a train, responsible for its safety, should have left his train standing on the main line track under the conditions existing at Adams at the time Conductor Gallant's train arrived there. At that time there were two clear tracks in the yard just ahead of his engine and he still had 10 minutes in which to pull into a clear track before the expiration of his 18-hour period of service. Head Brakeman Develing already had the switch lined up to permit the train to pull into the yard but was ordered to cut the engine off and send it to the engine house. After committing this initial error Conductor Gallant was further negligent in failing to exercise even ordinary precaution to protect his train while it was standing on the main line. He did not communicate with the dispatcher directly nor receive any assurance from the dispatcher that his train would be protected, as was customary in cases of this kind. He did not even take the obvious precaution to throw a switch behind his train leading into the passing track on the south side of the main track. Had this switch been thrown, a train approaching Adams from the west would have been diverted from the main track into the passing track. Neglecting to exercise these ordinary precautions, Conductor Gallant and his three brakemen went to sleep in the caboose standing on the main line, depending only for protection against following trains on the track on the rear end of the caboose, although knowing that extra 308 was following them into Adams, and knowing further

that the train dispatcher could not communicate with extra 808 on account of there being no night telegraph service between Adams and Overly. Such negligence as was displayed by Conductor Gallant in this case was but an invitation to the accident which actually occurred.

Contributing to the accident was the action of Dispatcher Rowan in failing to satisfy himself that train No. 80 was properly protected when notified by the operator at Adams that the train was tied up on the main line. Had he directed the operator at Adams to look out for the rear end of train No. 80 until after the arrival of extra 808 or notified the dispatcher who relieved him at midnight to do so, this accident might have been averted.

The facts developed in this investigation indicate that the operating practices on this division of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault St. Marie Railway are not conducive to safety. It appeared that trains were frequently tied up on main line some distance from terminals on account of not being able to complete their runs inside of 18 hours. This indicates inefficient management of a district only 101 miles between terminals. The operation of trains over 101 miles of track without any night telegraph service is also an unsafe practice and is likely to lead to accident as in this case. Had there been a night office between Egeland and Adams the dispatcher would have been able to notify the crew of extra 808 of the condition of train No. 80. Egeland is a junction point where trains are turned and run to different points, yet there is no night operator employed there and no train register is kept. Unless there is a reformation in the operating practices here referred to, accidents such as this may be expected to occur.

All the employees involved in this accident were experienced men with good records. At the time of the accident the crew of extra 808 had been on duty 7 hours and 50 minutes after 28 hours and 50 minutes off duty. The crew of train No. 80 tied up after having been 18 hours and 50 minutes on duty after 8 hours and 15 minutes off duty. There was no sufficient reason for this tie up, as the 18-hour law does not contemplate that the men shall stop their trains on main line at the expiration of 18 hours and leave lives and property exposed to such unprotected obstruction.