

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
MINNEAPOLIS, ST. PAUL & SAULT STE MARIE RAILROAD,
AT OGEMA, WIS., ON NOVEMBER 7, 1918.

December 13, 1918.

On November 7, 1918, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad at Ogema, Wis., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees. After investigation, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Sixth District of the Chicago Division on which this accident occurred is a single-track line extending between Spencer and Ashland, Wis., over which train movements are governed by time table and train orders. The maximum speed allowed freight trains is 30 miles an hour.

The trains involved in this accident were regular way freight No. 143 north and extra freight 2419 north.

Train No. 143, consisting of an engine, 11 loaded cars and a caboose in charge of Conductor (iso and Engineer Mathews was called to leave Abbotsford, Wis., at 7.30 a.m. on November 7th, and left at 10.55 a.m., having been delayed by No. 121 and by the absence of two members of the crew. This train left Kenosha, Wis., the last open telegraph station at 7.25 p.m., arrived at Ogema at 7.45 p.m., 9 hours and 25 minutes late, and stopped there to unload freight, with the caboose and rear car spotted at the station platform. After unloading freight from the rear car, the train was backed up and the street crossing at the south end of the station plat-

farm was out, leaving the caboose and two cars south of the crossing and the third rear car spotted at the platform for unloading. No flagman was sent out and the train stood on the main track 25 minutes with no protection whatever.

Extra 2419, consisting of engine 2419, 14 loaded and 34 empty cars and a caboose, left Stevens Point, Wis. at 10.50 a.m., and at 8.10 p.m., while running at a speed of about 17 miles an hour collided with the rear of train No. 143.

Engine 2419 had its front end badly damaged. The caboose and two rear cars in No. 143 were totally destroyed and the next three cars seriously damaged. The flagman who was in the caboose was killed.

Approaching the point of accident from the south the track is straight for a distance of almost two miles and there is a slight descending grade toward the north for approximately 1 mile to a point about 650 feet south of the scene of the accident, at which point there is a bridge over a small stream. From the bridge to the point of accident there is a slight ascending grade toward the north. On the east side of the track looking north there was normally no obstruction to the view for a distance of two miles south of the station. On the west side of the track about 125 feet south of the station platform is located a water tank which obstructs the view of the station from a point south of the tank. A saw mill is situated to the east of the track between the bridge and the

point of accident. At the time of the accident steam from the saw mill was blowing across the track behind the caboose and obstructed the view of an approaching train. The whistle at the saw mill was tied down and was being blown by citizens in premature peace celebration. The weather was misty and heavy.

Conductor Rice of train 143 stated that the fireman and Flagman Joan had gotten into difficulty with some pro-Germans the night before in Abbotsford and had been arrested; that he had gone on their bond; that the train had been delayed to some extent by these events, but that part of the delay was on account of No. 121 and not a great deal of it was due to waiting for these two members of his crew. He said he knew extra 2419 was behind and would probably overtake them; that as he got off the train at Ogema he looked back and could see all the switch lights burning; that no fusées or torpedoes had been left on the track at Westboro and no Flagman was sent back at Ogema. He stated that during the time they were unloading freight at Ogema the weather was clear, the switch lights all through the yard were plainly visible, and in addition to this the fact that his train was on straight track and, as he thought, visible for about two miles caused him to believe flagging protection unnecessary. He stated that they unloaded freight from two way cars, backed and out the crossing leaving the caboose and two cars south of the crossing, the caboose being almost opposite the water tank;

that they then spotted and unloaded freight from the third car and were about to unload from the fourth when the accident occurred. Conductor also stated that he was in the car handing out freight to the brakemen when Brakeman Sannell shouted to him to jump. Just as he jumped he heard the cars crash behind him. He said he first heard the whistle of extra 2419 not more than a minute before the collision occurred.

Brakeman Sannell of train 146 stated that his train was late leaving Abbotsford; that after reaching Ogema they unloaded freight from two cars, backed these two cars and the caboose south of the crossing, out the crossing, spotted the next car at the station platform and unloaded from it. They were just about to begin unloading from another car, the conductor had gotten into it and the brakeman was sitting the door of the car they had finished when he saw the extra approaching and called to the conductor to jump. After the collision the caboose caught fire, but the crew extinguished it. Brakeman Sannell also stated that after leaving Estero, Flagman Dean had said he did not feel well and did not do any more work, but was in the caboose lying down up to the time the collision occurred.

Brakeman Friday of train 146 stated that this was his first regular trip as brakeman; that he reported about 7.10 a.m., but did not leave until about 11 a.m.; that he did not see the flagman around helping before they left Abbotsford; that at Estero, he (Friday) went back to flag; that no one

had told him how to flag a train, but that he thought he knew just about how and had taken a red lantern and gone back about six or eight car lengths, but carried no torpedoes or fuses. He stated that all the crew worked at

easthere. After reaching Ogema, he, Conductor Rice and brakeman Sannell were unloading freight when the collision occurred. He said that Flagman Dean had been working all during the day, but leaving westhere he said he was sick; that he lay down in the caboose and stayed there and did not help at Ogema.

Engineman Ryder of extra 2412 stated that on the day of the accident the weather was rainy; that at the time the collision occurred it was dark, but not very cloudy; that although the track at Ogema was straight the whistle at the mill was blowing steam across the track so that it was impossible for him to see beyond the steam; that had the steam from the mill whistle not been blowing across the track he would have been able to see the caboose for a considerably greater distance; that just as he started on the ascending grade he could see the caboose; that as soon as he saw it he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency; that at that time the train was running about 17 miles an hour, and that the brakes were in good condition. He also stated that after he saw the train standing and realized that he could not stop he whistled a number of times; and that he did not leave the engine until right at the crossing after it had hit the caboose. He further stated that if he had run over any torpe-

does or received any signal before passing the steam at Ogema he could have stopped. He said he knew train No. 143 was ahead of him.

A check of the train sheet shows that extra 2419 did not exceed the speed limit of 30 miles an hour between Medford and Ogema.

This accident was caused by the failure of Conductor Rice to see that his train was properly protected. His failure on this occasion was particularly blameworthy since he knew that Extra 2419 was following his train closely and he expected to be overtaken by them at Ogema. Conductor Rice is 37 years of age and had been in the service of this company more than 12 years as a conductor, previous to which he had been employed about 4 years as a brakeman.

Flagman Dean was negligent in not protecting the rear of his train even without any special instructions from the conductor to do so and is equally responsible with Conductor Rice for this accident.

Flagman Dean was 26 years of age and had been employed as a brakeman by this company for more than 7 years.

The crew of No. 143 had been on duty about 12 hours and 40 minutes, and the crew of 2419 about 10 hours and 10 minutes at the time the accident occurred.