

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
MINNEAPOLIS, ST. PAUL & SAULT STE. MARIE RAILWAY AT
STOCKTON, WIS., ON OCTOBER 8, 1917.

October 25, 1917.

On October 8, 1917, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway at Stockton, Wis., which resulted in the death of two employees and injury to 17 passengers and 7 employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The part of the Chicago Division on which this accident occurred is a single-track line, over which train movements are governed by timetable and train orders, no block signal system being in use.

The collision occurred on the main line just west of the east end of the passing track at Stockton, at a point 4,000 feet east of the station. Approaching this point from the east, there is a 2-degree curve to the right 3,120 feet long, this curve running through a cut varying from 5 to 50 feet in height; then the track is straight for a distance of 2,470 feet to the point of collision. The grade from a point one mile east of the point of accident descends toward the west about .3 percent. Both of the locomotives involved were equipped with Pyle electric headlights which were in good condition and burning properly. The weather at the time was clear.

Eastbound passenger train No. 4, in charge of Conductor Bartholomew and Engineer Harrison, consisted of locomotive 2715, 1 mail car, 1 baggage car, 1 buffet car, 3 Pullman cars and 2 coaches, all of steel construction with the exception of the baggage car, which was of wooden construction. This train was en route from Minneapolis, Minn., to Chicago, Ill., and was scheduled to meet passenger train No. 3 at Stevens Point, Wis., and to depart from that station at 2:10 a. m. Upon arrival of train No. 4 at Stevens Point, the crew received copies of train orders Nos. 5 and 7 which read as follows:

Order No. 5: "No. 3 will run 30 mins. late
Saupega to Stevens Point."

Order No. 7: " * * * No. 3 take siding and
meet No. 4 Stockton instead
of Stevens Point."

After receiving these orders train No. 4 departed from Stevens Point at 2:12 a. m., and at 2:26 a. m. arrived at Stockton where it stopped on the main track just west of the east switch to the passing track. While standing there train No. 3 approached and collided with it at 2:27 a. m.

Westbound passenger train No. 3, en route from Chicago, Ill., to Minneapolis, Minn., consisted of locomotive 2717, 1 baggage car, 1 buffet car, 1 Pullman car and 2 coaches. All of these cars were of steel construction with the exception of the baggage and buffet cars, which were of wooden construction. This train was scheduled to leave Waupaca, a station 28.4 miles from Stevens Point, at 1:19 a. m. and was scheduled to meet train No. 4 at Stevens Point at 2:00 a. m. On the day of the accident train No. 3 was late and at Waupaca received copies of train orders Nos. 5 and 7, quoted above. It left Waupaca at 2:01 a. m. and passed Nelson, the last open telegraph station, 11.4 miles east of Stockton at 2:16 a. m. The engineer failed to bring his train to a stop in order to take the siding at Stockton and while traveling at a speed of about 30 or 35 miles an hour, collided with train No. 4.

The locomotives of both trains were badly damaged. The baggage car of train No. 3 had one end broken, while both sides and the deck were badly damaged. The buffet car sustained the most severe damage of any of the cars, having its vestibule crushed and the upper and lower decks damaged. The mail car, the baggage car and one of the Pullman cars of train No. 4 were also damaged to some extent.

The engineer of both trains were killed in the accident.

Fireman Nelson, of train No. 4, stated that when his train stopped on the main track just clear of the east end of the passing siding at Stockton, he could see the reflection of the headlight of train No. 3, and a short time later saw the train approaching at a high rate of speed. Feeling sure that they were not going to stop, he called to the engineer who was sitting on his seat box, and the fireman stated that he then darted through the gangway and got on to the ground just as the collision occurred.

Fireman Geibel, of train No. 3, stated that his crew received train orders at Neenah instructing trains Nos. 3 and 4 to meet at Stevens Point and for train No. 4 to take the siding. He said that at Waupaca they received an order which named Stockton instead of Stevens Point as the meeting point for these trains and which instructed his train to take the siding. He stated that the engineer read the orders aloud to the conductor and then handed them to him and he understood them well. Fireman Geibel further stated that as his train came on to the straight track east of the Stockton passing track, he saw the headlight of train No. 4 and said to Engineer McAdams, "Look, they are there." The engineer made no reply but immediately shut off steam, made a service application of the brakes, pushed

his cab windows wide open and sat up straight on his seat box. The fireman stated that he realized that they were then getting close to the switch and again called out to the engineman. He stated that he then saw the engineman throw the brake valve in the emergency position and start to get off the locomotive. After the locomotive had passed over the east switch of the passing track, he jumped from the locomotive. The fireman also said that he could not account for the failure of Engineman McAdams to stop to take the siding at Stockton, that he was seemingly in good spirits and that his demeanor was the same as usual.

Conductor Yantis, of train No. 3, stated that when he received copies of train orders Nos. 5 and 7 at Waupaca, he took them both to the engineman who read them aloud, after which he handed them to the fireman who also read them aloud. The conductor stated that the engineman then said, "Take siding and meet No. 4 at Stockton," to which he replied, "Yes, No. 3 take siding and meet No. 4 at Stockton" and then they both said, "All right, instead of Stevens Point." The conductor further stated that he was riding in the forward end of the buffet car approaching Stockton and felt the brakes being applied, whereupon he went to the door on the left side of the car and looked out, but saw nothing on account of the smoke trailing down into the cut on that side. He then went to the opposite side of the car, opened the door and upon looking out saw the headlight of train No. 4; he then started for the conductor's brake valve and had taken two steps toward it when the collision occurred.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman McAdams, of train No. 3, to stop his train and take the siding at Stockton for train No. 4, as required by train order No. 6. Inasmuch as he was killed in the collision, no reason can be assigned for this failure.

It is to be noted that each locomotive was equipped with a Pyle electric headlight in good condition. Train No. 4 was standing on the main track, there was nearly one-half mile of straight track approaching the scene of the accident within which to bring train No. 3 to a stop, and why the engineman of that train did not control the speed of his train is unexplainable.

Engineman McAdams entered the service of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railway as engineman in January, 1885 and during his period of service he had been disciplined on four different occasions for responsibility in connection with accidents.

At the time of the accident the crew of train No. 3 had been on duty about 4 hours after a period off duty of about 30 hours.

D.W.L.