

March 22, 1915.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
NEVADA-CALIFORNIA-OREGON RAILWAY AT HORSE LAKE, CALIF.,  
ON FEBRUARY 23, 1915.

On February 23, 1915, there was a rear end collision between a mixed train and a freight train on the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway at Horse Lake, Calif., which resulted in the death of one passenger. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Division of Safety submits the following report:

The Nevada-California-Oregon Railway is a single track, narrow gauge, line extending between Lakeview, Ore., and Reno, Nev. The movement of trains is controlled by time-table and train orders; no block system being used.

Southbound first class, mixed train No. 2, consisted of engine No. 3, two ballast cars, one refrigerator car, one combination mail baggage and express car, one coach and one buffet car. It was in charge of engineman Coffman and Conductor Berry. The train crew consisted of one brakeman, and a porter, who was in charge of the buffet car. The train left Lakeview, its initial station, 124 miles north of Horse Lake, at 7.30 a.m., 1 hour 10 minutes late. It passed Ravendale, the last station, 11.5 miles north of Horse Lake at 1.37 p.m. and arrived at Horse Lake at 2.15 p.m. The train stopped with its rear end 495 feet north of the station to take water. The engine had just been recoupled to the train, after taking water, when the rear end was struck by freight extra 12.

Southbound freight extra 12 consisted of engine No. 12, 14 cars of cattle and a caboose and was in charge of engineman

Dwyer and Conductor Forester. The train left Alturas, its initial station, 70 miles north of Horse Lake, at 9.10 a.m. and passed Ravendale at 1.47 p.m., ten minutes behind train No. 2, and while running at a speed of about 4 miles per hour collided with train No. 2, at Horse Lake at about 2.20 p.m.

Both platforms of the buffet car and the rear platform of the coach were crushed, and the ends of these cars were badly damaged.

Approaching the scene of the accident from a point about one-half mile north, the track is tangent for 925 feet, followed by a curve to the right, 640 feet in length which in turn is followed by a tangent 934 feet in length. The rear end of No. 2 stood at the south end of this tangent when the accident occurred, and could be seen by the engineman of extra 12 for a distance of about 1,000 feet. At this point there is a descending grade of 1.9% for southbound trains.

The weather at the time of the accident was misty and the rails were slippery.

Engineman Coffman, of train No. 2, stated that his train arrived at Horse Lake at about 2.15 p.m., and that they had finished taking water and had started to recouple the engine to the train when he heard extra 12 whistle for brakes. They had finished coupling up and he had opened the throttle when the collision occurred. He further stated that train No. 2 always took water at Horse Lake.

Conductor Berry, of train No. 2, stated that upon

arrival at Horse Lake, he went to the station to register, and was receiving a message by telephone when he heard an engine whistle. The collision occurred before he could get out of the station. He stated that when his train arrived at Horse Lake he instructed the brakeman to go to the head end and uncouple the engine to take water, but did not make any arrangements, or have any understanding with the porter, relative to protecting the rear of the train. He also stated that there was a red flag in the rear car of his train at the time of the accident, notwithstanding the contrary statement of Porter Robinson.

Brakeman Steen, of train No. 2, stated that upon arrival at Horse Lake, he went to the head end of the train to couple up after taking water. He had recoupled the engine to the train, and the train had moved four or five feet when the collision occurred. His train had then been at Horse Lake four or five minutes. He further stated that in the past they had not been depending upon the porter to protect the rear of the train.

Train Porter Robinson, of train No. 2, stated that his train had been stopped at Horse Lake four or five minutes when he heard an engine whistle for the station. He ran to the rear end of the buffet car and tried to find a red flag, but finding none seized a green flag, jumped off the rear platform and started back to stop extra 12. He had gone about 3 car lengths when extra 12 passed him. He stated that this was his first trip with Conductor Berry and that Conductor Berry did not say anything to him about protecting the rear of the train. Previous

to the accident he had called the conductor's attention to the fact that there was not any red flag on the rear car. He further stated that it was his duty to cook meals and serve drinks on the buffet car; and that it was not his duty, and that he never had been called upon, to act as <sup>a</sup>flagman. In this instance he made an attempt to protect the rear of his train because he saw that there was danger of an accident.

Engineman Dwyer, of extra 12, stated that train No. 2 was at Ravendale when he arrived and left there about ten minutes ahead of him. He stated that he expected to find train No. 2 taking water at Horse Lake, properly protected by a flag. Approaching the curve north of Horse Lake his train was running at a speed of about 10 miles per hour and was under control. Upon rounding the curve he saw the rear end of train No. 2 standing on the main track about 450 feet ahead of him. He immediately used sand and applied the air brakes; he then whistled for train No. 2 to go ahead, and also whistled for hand brakes to notify his crew of danger. The air brakes responded properly, but the train failed to stop in time to prevent collision. He stated that he saw the porter standing on the rear of the buffet car of train No. 2, and that he saw him step inside and get a green flag, but that he did not get off the car until extra 12 was about 2 car lengths away. He further stated that he did not intend to stop at Horse Lake until he saw train No. 2 standing there.

Fireman Lamb, of extra 12, stated that approaching the curve north of Horse Lake he was looking for a flagman, but did

see any and so informed the engineman. When he first saw train No. 2, his train was rounding the curve north of Horse Lake station and the rear of train No. 2 was then five or six hundred feet distant. At that time his train was running at a speed of about 12 miles per hour, but when the collision occurred the speed had been reduced to five or six miles per hour.

This accident was caused by train No. 2 occupying the main track without protection while stopping to take water, for which Conductor Berry is responsible.

General Rules Nos. 96 and 193 read as follows:

96. 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, one-fourth of a mile from the rear of the train he will place one torpedo on the rail, continuing back one-half mile from the rear of his train, he will place two torpedoes on the rail, two rail lengths apart. He may then return to the single torpedo where he must remain until relieved by another flagman or is recalled by the whistle of his engine.

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Conductors are responsible for the full protection of their trains in both directions and under all conditions.

193. Conductors must not allow other duties to interfere with the proper protection of their train, and invariably require their flagman to act with the utmost promptness and in strict accordance with the rules. A flagman must always be stationed on the rear car of every train while in motion; on passenger trains the flagman will get on and off of the head end of the last car, and must not, except in case of emergency, disturb the occupants; and must have in his possession the necessary flagging equipment, ready for immediate use.

Under these rules, as soon as train No. 2 stopped, a flagman

should have gone back immediately at least one-half mile with proper signals to stop approaching trains, and it was the duty of the conductor to know that this rule was obeyed. Conductor Berry did not do this; but assigned the brakeman to other duties, contrary to rule No.193, and made no provision for any other employee to assume the flagman's duties. Conductor Berry saw extra 12 behind him at Ravendale and knew that they were following him closely. This should have prompted him to use additional care in providing protection for the rear of his train.

It is believed that Engineman Dwyer, of extra 12, used poor judgment in not having his train under full control approaching Horse Lake. He knew that he was following train No. 2 closely, and he knew that it was the practice for trains to take water at Horse Lake. Under these conditions Engineman Dwyer should have approached Horse Lake at such a speed as would have enabled him to bring his train to a stop without accident in case he should find train No. 2 taking water.