

In re. Investigation of an Accident which occurred on the New York Central Railroad, in Belle Isle Yard, April 9, 1916.

On April 9, 1916, there was a side collision on the New York Central Railroad in Belle Isle Yard, west of Syracuse, N. Y., which resulted in the death of a fireman. The investigation of this accident was made in conjunction with representatives of the Public Service Commission of the State of New York, and as a result of this investigation the Chief of the Division of Safety submits the following report:

On the day of the accident locomotive 3134, hauling a caboose, left East Syracuse at 9.25 a. m., in charge of Conductor Snyder and Engineman Marriot. It arrived at Syracuse Junction at 10.00 a. m., and departed for Belle Isle yard at 10.06 a. m. The crew was delayed in that yard and was not ready to depart with their train of 61 cars, train M. C. 7, until 1.30 p. m., at which time the train proceeded from track 10 of the West Shore Railroad, to the connection with the New York Central tracks, thence across eastbound New York Central track 4 to westbound track 3. The locomotive was crossing to track 3 when it was struck by locomotive 3680, which was being operated backing up on that track.

Locomotive 3680, with a caboose, was in charge of Conductor Killoran and Engineman Greenagle. It left East

Syracuse at 12.25 p. m., and on arrival at Syracuse Junction instructions were given to proceed west to the western end of Belle Isle yard, using New York Central track 3. It was then to cross over to the West Shore tracks via the connection, in doing which it would make a movement practically the reverse of that made by train M. C. 7. Locomotive 3680 departed from Syracuse Junction at 1.26 p. m., and collided with locomotive 3134 at about 1.40 p. m.

The tender of locomotive 3680 struck locomotive 3134 at the gangway, derailing both tenders and tearing off the cab of locomotive 3134. The blow-off cock on the boiler of locomotive 3134 was also knocked off and the fireman of that locomotive, who was caught and held down by the wreckage, was fatally scalded.

This part of the New York Central Railroad is a four-track line. It is joined to the main trunks of the West Shore Railroad by a connection about 900 feet in length. Extending eastward from the point of accident on track 3 the track is straight and the view unobstructed for about one mile. At a point about 85 feet west of the point of accident is signal 29673, on track 3, while signal 29573, also governing track 3, is about 1 mile east of the point accident, and in clear weather this signal can be clearly seen from signal 29673.

When making a train movement from the West Shore tracks to New York Central track 3, after the train has

reached the connection between the two roads, the one-lever stand unlocking the switches of the crossover between tracks 4 and 3 should be unlocked first, as a result of which the signal on track 4, as well as the two signals on track 3, Nos. 29673 and 29573, either assume or remain in the stop position. The one-lever stand unlocking the connection switch and the derail is then operated, followed by the throwing of the switch and the derail. The crossover switches are then thrown for the desired movement, the east switch being handled first.

Engineman Marriot, of train M. C. 7, stated that his locomotive was just coming onto track 4 when the brakeman, who had been throwing switches ahead of his train threw the switch to track 3 at the western end of the crossover, and then turned and walked toward the locomotive. He thought that from this position the brakeman had an unobstructed view of anything that might be approaching on track 3, and stated that at this time his locomotive was pulling hard and slipping, and that he was paying considerable attention to its operation. He did not ask the fireman, who was killed in the accident, to look back and see if anything was approaching on track 3, and stated that he did not know that there was anything on that track until the collision occurred. He thought the speed of his train at the time was about 4 or 5 miles an hour. He also stated that he

looked at the automatic signal, No. 29673, governing track 3, and that each time he looked at it it was in the stop position.

Brakeman Rant stated that after throwing the switches leading from the West Shore tracks to the connection with the New York Central tracks, he threw the lever and then the switch leading from track 4 to track 3 at the eastern end of the crossover. He then went back to the connection and threw the lever and switch leading from the connection to track 4, and then threw the derail switch. He stated that he then came up track 4, crossed over to the switch for track 3, and turned it, this switch being located between tracks 4 and 3. At the time he threw this switch the locomotive hauling his train was a few car lengths behind him, or about at the switch at the eastern end of the crossover on track 4. He stated that when he threw the lever on track 4, he looked east, but did not see anything approaching, while the automatic signal on the bridge just west of the crossover was in the caution position, and went to the stop position when he threw the lever. He stated that when he went ahead of his train to throw the switch on track 3 he could not see locomotive 3680 on account of the fact that the locomotive hauling his own train had pulled out just enough to foul the track and obscure his view of anything which might be approaching on track 3. He did not see locomotive 3680 until it was

3 or 4 car lengths away, at which time he thought the speed of his train was 6 or 7 miles an hour, while locomotive 3680 was traveling about as fast, or perhaps a little faster. He then stepped over between tracks 3 and 2 and began giving stop signals to the engineman of locomotive 3680. He saw the engineman leaning out of the window, but he made no apparent effort to stop, and the brakeman did not think that he applied the air brakes, being apparently engaged in watching the block signal on the signal bridge.

Fireman Fournier, on locomotive 3680, stated that after working on the injector he was about to roll up the curtain when he happened to look out of the window and saw that the two locomotives were about to collide. He at once called to Engineman Greenagle, but the collision occurred about two seconds afterwards. He stated that his locomotive was drifting at a speed of about 6 or 7 miles per hour and that he did not know whether or not the brakes were applied. At the time of the accident, Engineman Greenagle was leaning out of the window, looking in the direction in which the locomotive was moving. Fireman Fournier also stated that he did not see the first automatic signal east of the point of accident, but that Engineman Greenagle called it clear.

Engineman Greenagle stated that the block signal approaching the crossover was in the clear position and that when about 10 car lengths past the first signal east of the

point of accident, signal No. 29573, he saw that the next automatic signal, signal No. 29673, was in the stop position, and as he approached it he heard train M. C. 7 pulling across the crossover, and knew that it was going to cross onto track 3, and that he could not use the crossover until the train had gone. Just before the collision occurred the fireman called to him and he then applied the air-brakes, but the collision occurred almost immediately. He stated that he did not know the position of the crossover switch and did not ask the fireman in regard to it, and when asked if he intended to pass the switch without knowing its position he said that he was under the impression that the switch was beyond the signal bridge, and that having received a clear signal at the preceding signal bridge he had a perfect right to go to the next signal. Engineman Greenagle also said that the fireman should have looked out on his side of the locomotive to observe conditions, and that he had instructed him to do so, but that on this particular occasion he did not say anything to him, as he was engaged in watching the block signal in order not to run by it. He said that he did not see anything of the brakeman who claimed he was standing between tracks 2 and 3, giving stop signals. He also said that the air-brakes on his locomotive were in good working order, that he had had occasion to use them four times before reaching the point of collision, and that they had worked properly. Engineman Greenagle also said that he had

been running over this part of the road since 1907, and that on several occasions he had hauled trains on the West Shore tracks, but that in the past three years he had not hauled a train from the West Shore over the connection to New York Central track 3. He had, however, run on track 3 on several occasions, and stated that he was familiar with the territory. He afterwards said that he knew that the signal on the bridge protected a facing point switch on track 4, leading to the connection with the West Shore track. He stated further that the speed of his locomotive did not exceed 8 miles an hour at any point between Syracuse Junction and the point of collision. The distance between the two points, however, is slightly over 3 miles, and as his locomotive was reported out of Syracuse Junction at 1.28 p. m., and the collision occurred at 1.40 p. m., the average speed was in the neighborhood of 13 miles an hour.

Conductor Snyder, of train M. C. 7, stated that when he went forward after the collision he asked Enginemen Greenagle how he happened to collide with train M. C. 7, and the engineman said that he thought he had a right to go to the signal bridge, and that the switch was on the other side of the signal. Conductor Snyder also said that he had ridden on locomotives when crossing over from the West Shore to the New York Central tracks and that it was the custom to get the signal from the man throwing the switches.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman

Greenagle, of locomotive 3680, to observe and obey rule 93 of the Rules for the Government of the Operating Department. This rule reads as follows:

"Within yard limits the main tracks may be used, protecting against first class trains. Second class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear."

According to his own statement, Engineman Greenagle knew that train M. C. 7 was using the crossover and that it was going to cross onto track 3, but in some way he was at the time under the impression that the crossover switch was west of the signal bridge and that he had a right to proceed to the signal bridge before stopping. In view of his experience as an engineman over this part of the road since 1907, previous to which he had been a fireman for several years, no reason for his error can be assigned.

In movements of this character firemen are supposed to watch switches and signals from their side of the locomotive. Fireman Fournier had been in the service less than five weeks. It is believed that had Fireman Fournier maintained a proper lookout, he would have seen train M. C. 7 in time to warn Engineman Greenagle, and the locomotive would have been brought to a stop in time to avoid the collision.

Engineman Greenagle was employed in 1901 as a fire cleaner, and in the same year was promoted to fireman, while in 1907, he was promoted to engineman. In 1912 he was sus-



pended for five days on account of a derailment of his locomotive, and in 1913, he was suspended for five days on account of an accident. Fireman Fournier entered the service on March 5, 1916, as a fireman, and had a clear record. At the time of the accident Engineman Greenagle and Fireman Fournier had been on duty about 2 hours, previous to which Engineman Greenagle had had about 11 hours off duty and Fireman Fournier over 60 hours off duty.