

June 14, 1912.

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF ACCIDENT ON THE NEW YORK, ONTARIO  
& WESTERN RAILWAY, March 12, 1912.

On March 12, 1912, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the New York, Ontario & Western Railway, near Galena, N. Y., resulting in the death of two employees and the injury of four employees.

This accident was reported by telegraph by the New York, Ontario & Western Railway Company on March 13, 1912, and after investigation the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

That part of the New York, Ontario & Western Railway on which this accident occurred is single track road, and trains are operated under the time-table and train order system. The road is crooked, and there are a number of grades of about one per cent. Between Galena and Smyrna, N. Y., a distance of about five and one-half miles, four automatic signals are installed, two for trains moving in each direction. These signals are of the exposed disk type, and are operated in connection with continuous track circuits. They were installed some years ago for the purpose of spacing trains following one another and for protecting trains while doubling the Smyrna grade, and have never been used to block trains running in opposite directions. The rules of the company require an engineman finding one of these signals in the danger position to reduce speed and blow one long blast of the whistle, but he is permitted to proceed past the signal without stopping.

The trains involved in this collision were north-bound regular train No. 29 and south-bound extra train No. 104. On the date of the accident train No. 29, consisting of fifteen loaded and three empty cars and a caboose, hauled by engine No. 168, left Norwich, N. Y., at 4:44 p. m., in charge of Conductor Dorman and Engineman Kingman. The crew of this train had five orders, one of which, order No. 74, read as follows:

"Extra 104 has right of track to Wilbers over No. 29."

Wilbers is a station 4.3 miles north of Galena and about ten miles north of Norwich. Train 29 met three trains at Galena, as required by its orders, and left that station at 5:30 p. m., colliding with extra No. 104 at a point about one and one-half miles north of Galena. Located about one mile north of Galena is one of the automatic signals previously mentioned. When train No. 29 approached this signal it was in the danger position, and the engineman's attention was called to it by Brakeman Cain, who was riding on the engine. Engineman Kingman read his orders again, and after remarking to the brakeman, "We

are all right", proceeded past the danger signal without blowing the whistle or reducing speed. The train was running about 15 or 20 miles per hour at the time, and brakeman Gain stated, "As we passed the signal our speed went up a little". Engineman Kingman continued to work steam until within 100 feet of the point where the collision occurred.

Conductor Stoddard and Engineman Adams were in charge of Extra No. 104, which left Rome, N. Y., at 12:50 p. m., bound for Norwich. This train consisted of engine No. 104, twenty-two cars and a caboose. At Randallville, a station 19 miles north of Norwich, Conductor Stoddard asked for orders against train 29. He was told by the operator that extra No. 105, which left Randallville just ahead of his train, had an order giving it right of track over train 29 to Galena. Conductor Stoddard told the operator that he wanted a similar order, saying "I will be ready to follow them out." He was given two copies of order No. 74, which he signed for, and, according to the operator's statement, read over to the operator as required by the rules. Conductor Stoddard did not show this order to his flagman, but after telling him that the train was going to Galena for No. 29, Stoddard mounted the engine and gave a copy of the order to Engineman Adams, who looked at it but did not read it carefully, as he said he understood Conductor Stoddard to say, "We are going to Galena for No. 29." Engineman Adams handed the order to his fireman, who read it and returned it to the engineman. The latter put the order in his pocket and gave it no further attention until after the collision. Brakeman Becraft, who was riding on the engine, did not read the order, but took the conductor's word that their train was going to Galena for No. 29. The conductor rode on the engine from Randallville to the point where the collision occurred. The train left Randallville at 4:33 p. m., passed Wilbers at 5:30 p. m., and collided with No. 29 at about 5:40.

At the time of the collision the speed of No. 29 was estimated at about 20 miles per hour, and the speed of No. 104 was estimated at about 30 miles per hour. The collision occurred on a curve of about two degrees and thirty minutes. On the inside of this curve there is an embankment about twenty-five feet high which prevented the engine crews from seeing the approaching trains until too late to prevent the collision. At the point where the collision occurred the track is practically level. At the time of the accident a light snow was falling.

After the accident Engineman Adams stated he understood the conductor to say that they were to go to Galena for No. 29, and consequently he only glanced at the order. He also understood from conversation between the conductor and the brakeman that they were to go to Galena for that train, and he paid no further attention to the orders.

This accident was caused by failure of the crew of extra No. 104 to obey order No. 74. Both Engineman Adams and Conductor Stoddard admit that they misread their orders. Fireman Cole of

extra No. 104 also read the order and did not detect the error; he was killed in the collision. It appears that the head brakeman did not see the order and it was not read aloud by anyone on the engine. There can be no excuse for the negligence of these employees, and as long as employees in charge of trains operated under the train order system fail to exercise proper care in handling and observing train orders, accidents of this character may be expected to occur.

Had the signals installed at this place been operated as block signals, it is probable that the accident would not have occurred.

In connection with this accident it is noted that the New York, Ontario & Western Railway Company permits engineers to pass these signals when they are red, indicating danger, without stopping. This practice is considered dangerous, as it has a tendency to make men careless in observing red signals generally.

All the employees involved in this accident were experienced men with good records. The train men of extra No. 104 had been on duty 14 hours and 38 minutes, after a period off duty of 22 hours and 30 minutes. The engineer had been on duty 15 hours and 5 minutes after a period off duty of 29 hours and 45 minutes, and the fireman had been on duty 15 hours and 5 minutes after a period off duty of 32 hours. The crew of train No. 29 had been on duty 1 hour and 25 minutes after periods off duty for the engine crew of 24 hours and 35 minutes and for the trainmen of 25 hours and 45 minutes.