

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED
ON THE OGDEN, LOGAN AND IDAHO RAILWAY AT
FAIRVIEW, IDAHO, ON NOVEMBER 22, 1917

December 20, 1917.

On November 22, 1917, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Ogden, Logan and Idaho Railway at Fairview, Idaho, resulting in the death of 3 persons and the injury of 2 persons. After investigation of this accident the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Ogden, Logan and Idaho Railway is a single-track electric line, extending between Ogden, Utah, and Preston, Idaho, a distance of 94.7 miles. Trains are operated by the train order and dispatching system. No block signals are used. Train orders are transmitted by telephone direct to train conductors, who write them in duplicate and report them back to the dispatcher. After being made complete by the dispatcher, an order received and written by the conductor is read by the conductor to the motorman, who is then required to place one copy on file in a prominent place in his cab until it is executed.

The trains involved in this collision were south-bound work extra 517, consisting of motor car 517, in charge of conductor Cathcart and motorman Hawkes, and northbound freight extra 800, consisting of motor car 800 and 3 merchandise cars, in charge of Conductor Warner and Motorman Lowland.

Work extra 517 left Preston at 7.05 a. m. with order No. 9, reading as follows:

"Motor 517 work 7 a. m. to 10:15 p. m. between Sugarton and Sullin protecting against work extra 517 until 5:30 p. m. and not protecting against other extra trains.

"Motor 517 run extra Preston to Sugarton then work 7:30 a. m. to 5:30 p. m. not protecting against extra trains between Sugarton and Sullin."

This order was signed by Conductor Cathcart and made complete by Dispatcher Mills at 6:47 a. m. Sugarton, the southern limit of work extra 517's running orders, is 9.5 miles south of Preston. The collision occurred at 7:16 a. m. at Fairview, a station 9.7 miles south of Preston, while extra 517 was running at a speed of about 20 miles per hour. There was a dense fog at the time of

the accident, greatly limiting the range of vision of the motormen.

Northbound extra 400 was en route from Corvallis to Preston; it had no orders concerning extra 517. This train took the siding at Fairview to meet southbound extra 951 and regular southbound passenger train No. 6. Extra 951 passed Fairview at 6:50 and train No. 6 passed at 7:12 a. m. After the passage of the latter train extra 400 backed out of the siding onto the main track, and had moved north only a short distance when the collision occurred, its speed at the time being about 7 miles per hour.

The force of the collision telescoped motor 800 for about half its length, all the fatalities occurring in this car. One pair of wheels on the forward truck of motor 517 were the only wheels to leave the track. Motor 517, being of steel construction, suffered comparatively little damage. Motor 800 had a steel underframe and wooden superstructure.

The collision occurred on a tangent, with straight track to the north for a distance of 3 miles, and to the south for a distance of more than a mile. Had the weather been clear the trains would have been in sight of each other for a distance of more than 4 miles.

Conductor Cathcart of extra 517 stated that his train was employed in work on the Cache Valley branch. He tied up in Preston every night and returned to Corvallis every morning. On the morning of the accident he received the usual order, and followed train No. 6 out of Preston. The fog was very dense, and upon approaching Fairview he said he advised the motorman to reduce speed to proceed across there as there might be some stock on the crossing.

The motorman reduced speed to about 15 miles per hour over this crossing, which is about 600 feet from the point of collision. Conductor Cathcart said he had no conversation with the dispatcher about extra 400, and knew nothing about that train. Had the weather been clear he said the accident would not have occurred.

Motorman Hawkes of extra 517, stated that Conductor Cathcart read the orders to him before leaving Preston, and he had an understanding of them with the conductor.

His train left Preston after the departure of train No. 6, and he had no knowledge of extra 800. The fog was very dense, and his vision was limited to a distance of 70 or 75 feet. He said his speed at the time of collision was not in excess of 20 miles per hour, as he had reduced speed for the Fairview crossing and was just beginning to build up again when the collision occurred.

Train Dispatcher Mills, who was on duty at the time of the accident, stated that when extra 800 arrived at Lewiston (a station 2.5 miles south of Fairview) he gave the crew in charge orders to meet southbound extra 951 at Fairview. When Conductor Cathcart later reported for orders for his train, Dispatcher Mills said he issued order No. 9, overlooking extra 800 for the time being. Shortly afterwards, in checking up his orders, he discovered that he had overlooked extra 800 and immediately took measures to avert the collision by calling the operator at the power station and having the power shut off. In this he was just too late to avoid the accident. The record at the power station shows that the power was off from 7.18 to 7.33 a. m. on the date of the accident. The collision occurred at 7.16. Dispatcher Mills accepted full responsibility for the accident, saying: "Nobody considered at fault but myself; just simply overlooked fixing the 800, just forgot it."

Station Agent Fischer, at Preston, stated that on the morning of the accident he arrived at the station about 30 minutes before train No. 6 left, and heard Conductor Cathcart getting his orders and talking with Dispatcher Mills over the telephone. He said that Cathcart was explaining to Mills just what work he was going to do when the conductor of No. 6 came in for orders, and was still talking to the dispatcher about what he was figuring on doing when No. 6 pulled out. He said that about 7:10 a. m., after extra 517 had departed, Dispatcher Mills called him and asked if extra 800 was in and if 517 had left. He told the dispatcher that he did not know whether or not the 800 was in, but went out and looked and came back and told him it was not in. Dispatcher Mills then made an exclamation about Conductor Cathcart and said: "If he had kept his face shut he would not have made me overlook it." It was about this time that the dispatcher ordered the power shut off.

Brakeman Hauck of extra 800 said that his train backed out of the siding after the departure of train No. 6, and started ahead slowly. He heard the motorman shout "look out" and knew nothing more until released

from the wreckage. The fog was so thick that he was able to see only a distance of 4 or 5 car lengths.

Motorman Howland of extra 800 states that he backed out of the side track after the departure of train No. 6 and was moving ahead very slowly when struck. The first intimation he had of the proximity of the other train was when the headlights of motor 517 showed up out of the fog just an instant before the collision.

This accident was caused by the failure of Dispatcher Mills to provide meeting orders for extra trains 517 and 800.

Dispatcher Mills was an experienced and competent employee, and his record was good. At the time of the accident he had been on duty a little more than seven hours after a period of sixteen hours off duty.

The members of the crew of extra 517 had been on duty less than one hour at the time of the accident, after a period of 12 hours and 40 minutes off duty, and the crew of extra 800 had been on duty about 8 hours and 30 minutes after 12 hours off duty.

F. W. B.