

In re investigation of an accident which occurred on the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company near Knaville, Idaho, on November 23, 1917.

December 18, 1917.

On November 23, 1917, there was a head-and collision on the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company between a passenger train and a work train near Knaville, Idaho, which resulted in the death of one employee and injury of seventeen employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The district on which this accident occurred is a single track line extending from Tacon, Wash., to Burke, Idaho, a distance of 85.7 miles, over which train movements are governed by time-table and train orders, no block signal system being in use.

The trains involved in this collision were east bound passenger train No. 26 running between Knaville, Ida. and Wallace, Ida. and a work train running as an extra between Pine Creek and Harrison.

Eastbound passenger train No. 26, consisting of 1 baggage and express car, 1 day coach and locomotive 1718, in charge of Conductor Philips and Engineer Mason, left Knaville, its terminal, at 7.01 a.m., 6 minutes late. When it reached a point about 2,120 feet east of the east passing track switch at Knaville it collided with extra 1751 at about 7.05 a.m., while running at a speed of about 18 miles an hour.

Work extra 1751 consisted of 1 flat car, 2 outfit box cars and a caboose, in the order named, hauled by locomotive 1751, in charge of Conductor Schultz and Engineer McQuinn, and at Pine Creek, 1.7 miles east of Knaville, the crew in charge received train order No. 10, reading as follows:

"Engine 1751 run extra Pine Creek to Harrison."
It left Pine Creek at 7.01 a.m. and was running in backward motion pushing its train when it collided with train No. 26, while running at a speed of about 18 miles an hour.

Brakeman Ewing, who was riding on the front platform of the caboose, was killed. The caboose telescoped with an outfit box car next to it, the outfit car being raised up over the caboose platform, telescoping the body of the caboose, passed over locomotive 1718, and came to rest on the rear end of the tender and front end of the baggage car of train No. 26. The caboose and both outfit box cars, being of wooden construction, were

practically destroyed. The flat car, of steel construction, had its trucks pushed from under it and its body thrown across the track, but the car was slightly damaged. Neither of the locomotives was derailed, but locomotive 1712 was considerably damaged while locomotive 1751 was slightly damaged.

Approaching the point of accident from Knoxville there is a 3-degree 50-minute curve to the right, 2,501 feet long, and extending 1,437 feet east of east passing track switch at Knoxville; then there is 403 feet of tangent, followed by a 4-degree 30-minute curve to the left, 1,236 feet long, the accident occurring 280 feet in on this curve. Approaching the point of accident from Pine Creek there is a 3-degree 30-minute curve to the left, 1,342 feet long; then 509 feet of tangent; then a 3-degree curve to the right, 1,119 feet long, followed by 1,145 feet of tangent; then a 4-degree 30-minute curve to the right, 1,235 feet long, the collision occurring 956 feet in on this curve.

On account of the curve and the mountain at point of accident the crews of both trains had very limited views ahead. The engineers of train No. 26 being on the outside of the curve could not see the approaching train, while the fireman of that train could see ahead but a short distance. The view of the engineers of extra 1751 was obstructed on account of his being on the outside of the curve, and the view of the fireman of that train was obstructed by the cars of his train which were between him and the approaching train. The conductor of extra 1751 was riding on the platform of the caboose of that train and saw the approaching train when it was 50 or 60 feet away. The weather at the time was cloudy and there was a heavy fog.

Engineer Mason of train No. 26 stated that his train left Knoxville and had passed the yard limit board there about seven or eight car lengths when the collision occurred, the speed of his train being between 15 and 20 miles an hour at the time. He could not see very far ahead on account of the fog and the curve and saw extra 1751 when it was about one car length away and immediately shut off steam and applied the air brakes. He said he would not have been able to see an approaching train any further away even had there been no fog for the curve and a rocky bluff obstructed his view. He said the headlight on locomotive 1712 was not burning when he left Knoxville as it was light enough to make it unnecessary.

Conductor Philips of train No. 26 stated that his train left Knoxville at about 7.00 a.m. and it was running at a speed of about 15 miles an hour when it collided with the work train. He stated that he had no orders concerning extra 1751 and had no knowledge of that train until the collision occurred.

Fireman Hibler of train No. 26 stated that he had been looking ahead and got down off the seat box to work on the fire when the collision occurred and did not see extra 1751 before the collision occurred. He thought the speed of his train was 12 or 15 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

Engineman McQueen of work extra 1751 stated that he had been on the work train working out from Pine Creek for seven days prior to the accident loading steel between Harrison and Watts and hauling it to Pine Creek, returning to Pine Creek at the close of each day's work. Generally his train left Pine Creek about 6.30 a.m. and would reach Emaville before train No. 26 arrived, but on this morning they were delayed and did not leave Pine Creek until 7.01 or 7.02 a.m. He stated that Conductor Schultz told him train No. 26 was 7 hours late, but that he did not check the train register with the conductor as required by the rules although all trains were required to register at Pine Creek. On the preceding morning his train nearly collided with another train while switching at Pine Creek and on this morning he had train 26 in mind and after receiving his orders he started to do some switching and while doing this work the flagman protected his train against train No. 26. When the conductor gave him the signal to proceed he started toward Emaville and entirely forgot that he was running on the time of train No. 26, and did not realize it was so late. He stated that there was considerable fog which got more dense as he proceeded and he could not see as far as the caboose of his train, and did not see train No. 26 until after the collision occurred. He stated, however, that he could not have seen train No. 26 approaching even had there been no fog as his view was obstructed on account of the curve. He thought the speed of his train was 17 or 18 miles an hour at the time of the collision.

Fireman Crooks of extra 1751 stated that after switching at Pine Creek the conductor gave orders to back up to Emaville and from the time they left Pine Creek until about a minute before the collision occurred he was working on the fire and did not have time to watch anything else. He said he could not see ahead as far as the caboose of his train and the first he knew of the accident was the jar caused by the impact of the two trains coming together. The only reason he gave for overlooking train No. 26 was that he was not familiar with the trains on this branch.

Conductor Schultz of extra 1751 stated that the operator at Pine Creek delivered the orders to him at 6.00 a.m. and his train left there between 6 and 7 o'clock backing up, pushing the train, and collided with train No. 26 about a mile west of Pine Creek. He was riding on the rear platform of the caboose and saw train No. 26 about 50 or 60 feet away and jumped from the train. He did not see it sooner on account of the fog.

He stated that usually the work train left Pine Creek earlier than it did on the day of the accident and would reach Knappa before the arrival of train No. 26, and this, in addition to thinking about train No. 93 which was late, caused him to overlook train No. 26.

Rule 87 of the operating rules of the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company provides as follows:

"An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

"Extra trains must clear the time of regular trains five minutes unless otherwise provided, and will be governed by train orders with respect to opposing extra trains.

This accident was caused by work extra 1751 occupying the main track on the time of train No. 26, a superior train, for which the crew of extra 1751 is responsible, they having overlooked train No. 26 and failed to comply with the requirements of rule 87, above quoted.

Conductor Schultz was employed as a brakeman on July 10, 1907, and promoted to conductor on August 17, 1917. Engineman Wetmore was employed on October 10, 1910, was out of service from November 12, 1914, to February 6, 1916, on account of reduction of force, and again from May 6, 1916, to July 20, 1916. Fireman Crooks was employed as a wiper on June 27, 1917, and promoted to fireman on July 17, 1917. All of these employees had good records, and at the time of the accident had been on duty one hour and five minutes.