

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD NEAR DEWART, PA., ON
NOVEMBER 23, 1918.

January 5, 1919.

On November 23, 1918, there was a head-end collision between two extra freight trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad near Dewart, Pa., which resulted in the death of 6 employees and the injury of 3 employees. After investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

The Williamsport Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad, upon which this accident occurred, is a double-track line over which trains are operated by time table rights and train orders, supplemented by a manual block system.

Eastbound extra 1478 consisted of engine 1478, 79 loaded cars and 1 empty car, and was in charge of Conductor St. Clair and Engineer Duff. It left Renovo, Pa., at 4 p.m., November 22nd, and upon arriving at YM tower, 67.8 miles east of Renovo, at 2.02 a.m., November 23rd, the crew received a copy of train order No. 108, reading as follows:

Extra 1478 east has right over opposing trains on westward track east end YM siding to west end of Q siding.

The west end of "Q" siding is located at Dewart Station.

Extra 1478 left YM tower at 3.30 a.m., passed DE tower, 2.8 miles east of YM tower, at 4.04 a.m., and collided with extra 3510 at 4.15 a.m. at a point about 1.5 miles east of DE tower, or nearly a mile west of Dewart, while running at a speed of 12 or 15 miles an hour.

Westbound extra 3510 consisted of engine 3510 and a

caboose, and was in charge of Conductor Kinley and Engineer Wright. It left Marysville, Pa., at 1 a.m., en route to Williamsport, passed HO tower, 3.3 miles east of Dewart, at 4.04 a.m., and collided with extra 1478 while running at a speed of 30 or 40 miles an hour.

The engineer, fireman and brakeman of extra 1478, and the engineer, fireman and conductor of extra 3510, were killed. Both locomotives were practically demolished. The first six cars in extra 1478 were tank cars loaded with fuel oil, and the tender and first tank car buckled upward. After they stopped the tender was in an upright position on its front end, the tank was torn loose from the frame of the first tank car and inclined toward the tender at an angle of about 60 degrees, the upper end bearing against the rear end of the tender and the frame bearing against the middle of the tender. Two of the tank cars were stove in, their contents flowed over the track and caught fire, and several cars were destroyed. The caboose of extra 3510 caught fire from an overturned stove and turned up.

Approaching the point of accident from Q tower, 0.7 miles east of Dewart, the track is straight for about 8,500 feet, then there is a 1-degree curve to the right, 3,235 feet long, the accident occurring 2,145 feet in on this curve. There is a 6-foot embankment on the inside of this curve. Approaching the point of accident from DE tower, the track is straight for about 8,500 feet, followed by the curve on which

the accident occurred. The accident occurred on a grade slightly descending for westbound trains. The weather at the time was clear.

Conductor St. Clair of extra 1478 stated that he was riding in the deck of the caboose on the right hand side of the train and the first intimation he had of the accident was a severe shock which threw him off his seat against the front of the deck. He immediately sent the flagman ahead to find out what had happened while he went back to flag. After arranging for the protection of the rear of his train he went to the front end and found the cars containing fuel oil piled up around the engine and the wreckage on fire. He said his train began running on the westbound track against the current of traffic at YH tower.

Flagman Blough of extra 1478 stated that he was riding in the caboose and when the train suddenly stopped he went forward to find out what had occurred, found that there had been a collision and the wreckage was on fire.

Brakeman Lemons of extra 5510 stated that he was riding in the deck of the caboose on the left hand side, and when he passed Q tower the advance and home signals were clear and the train order signal was not displayed. He said Conductor Kinley also saw the signals and called to him that they were clear. Just before the accident occurred he and Conductor Kinley saw a headlight approaching and the conductor inquired of him what track it was on. At that time he could not tell, on account of the curve and smoke from the engine, but when

they had reached a point where he could see it was on the westbound track, it was too late to do anything but brace themselves for the inevitable collision.

Dispatcher Penny stated that he issued train order 108 allowing extra 1478 to run over the westbound track from YM tower to DE tower in order to keep from delaying that train. He said he gave the order simultaneously to the operators at Q, DE and YM towers and it was repeated and made complete to those offices at 3.08, 3.09 and 3.10 a.m., respectively. About 3.55 a.m. he called the operator at DE tower and asked about extra 1478 and was told that it had stopped west of the tower and the crew was fixing its headlight; later the operator reported that train as passing DE tower at 4.04 a.m. As the crew on extra 3510 was nearing the 18-hour limit he was anxious to have that train reach Williamsport by 5.15 a.m. He also wanted to know if extra 1478 would clear extra 3510 at Q tower, and at about 4.13 a.m. he called the operator at Q tower and asked him if he could see anything of extra 1478, to which the operator replied, "Not in sight." About 4.15 a.m. the operator at Q tower advised him that he had allowed extra 3510 to pass on a clear signal, saying that his order light had gone out, and when that train whistled he gave them the signal to proceed, having forgotten order No. 108. Dispatcher Penny said he then called the operator at DE tower, asked him if he could still see extra 1478, and the operator replied he could see only its markers. He then informed the assistant train master of what had occurred and arranged to send out the wrecker. He

said Operator Sehrey at Q tower answered all his calls promptly and he seemed to know what he was doing.

Operator Sehrey at Q tower stated that he received train order 108, put the train order light in proper position, but did not recall looking at it afterwards. Later he was reading a book and about two minutes before extra 3510 arrived he lay down on the table, but is positive he did not go to sleep. When he saw the light of extra 3510 he jumped up and pulled the train order board into the clear position, reported the train to DE tower; after it had passed it occurred to him that he had not delivered train order 108 to the crew. He then looked at the train order light and it had gone out. He was unable to explain why he pulled the train order board into clear position. He said he had been employed at Q tower for about a year and he went off duty at 7 a.m. the day before the accident and did not go on duty until 11 p.m., but had slept only about 4 hours that day. He admitted that he had called the operator at MO tower and asked her not to report extra 3510 and said, "I suppose I wanted a nap," but sat down to read until about two or three minutes before extra 3510 arrived. He said Operator Gresh at DE tower had asked him for the block for extra 1478 and he had given it to him.

Operator Gresh at DE tower stated that when extra 1478 arrived he asked Operator Sehrey for the block for that train and received it. About 4.10 a.m. Operator Sehrey reported extra 3510 as having passed Q tower and when he called his at-

tion to extra 1478 still being in the block, Operator Schrey said he had forgotten about it. He said he had had no difficulty in calling Operator Schrey, that he did not appear to be sleepy, and apparently understood that extra 1478 was in the block on the westbound track.

Operator Devon at MO tower stated that when she secured the block from Operator Schrey for extra 3510 he requested that she do not report that train then, as he would get it later. She said she had had no difficulty in calling him during the night and he reported all trains promptly.

Operator Biever came on duty at Q tower at 7 a.m., November 23rd, and said that he examined the train order light, found it in good condition with plenty of oil and a good wick, and in the position it should be in when train orders are to be delivered.

This accident was caused by the failure of Operator Schrey to deliver train order 108 to the crew of extra 3510 and hold that train at Q tower until the arrival of extra 1478.

The evidence is positive that Operator Schrey received train order 108 and understood its contents, and knew that extra 1478 was in the block between Q and DE towers. It was also disclosed that when the operator at MO tower secured the block from him for extra 3510 Operator Schrey requested her not to report that train, as he would get it a little later, the request having been made apparently for the purpose of giving him an opportunity to take a nap. While he claims that he had lain down on the table for about two minutes before the

arrival of extra 3510 and had not been asleep, when that train did arrive he forgot all about train order 106 and cleared the signal for that train to pass; his actions would indicate that if he had not been asleep, he was at least confused and not on the alert. The evidence also shows that he hung up his train order light without making sure that it was burning after having been hung in place, and when extra 3510 arrived the light was not burning. Had he made sure that that light was burning it is very probable that extra 3510 would have been stopped and the accident averted.

Operator Schrey was employed as a signaller on December 28, 1916, and as a telegraph operator on February 9, 1918. The record shows that he had been suspended for sleeping on duty on May 31, 1918. At the time of the accident he had been on duty 5 hours and 17 minutes after having been off duty 16 hours. The crew of extra 1478 had been on duty about 12 hours, while the crew of extra 3510 had been called for duty at 10.30 a.m., November 22nd, relieved at 11 p.m., and called for duty at 1 a.m., November 23rd, the accident occurring at 4.15 a.m.

JOT.