

**IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE  
PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD, AT EAST BEDFORD, OHIO, ON  
OCTOBER 3, 1918.**

**Dec. 12, 1918.**

On October 3, 1918, there was an accident on the Pennsylvania Railroad at East Bedford, Ohio, which resulted in the death of 20 and the injury of 18 persons, all of whom were waiting for or had already alighted from an East Bedford train. After investigation, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

This accident occurred on the Cleveland & Pittsburgh division, a double-track line, over which trains are operated by time table and train orders, supplemented by an automatic block system. The current of traffic is eastbound on the south track and westbound on the north track. Approaching East Bedford from the east the track is tangent for a distance of 1.84 miles to the point of accident, and so continues for a distance of about 4,000 feet beyond.

For the purpose of discharging and receiving passengers the Pennsylvania Railroad has erected cinder platforms at East Bedford about 200 feet in length, one of which is located on the south side of the eastbound track and another on the north side of the westbound track. The tracks at this point are in the deepest part of a 12 to 18 foot cut about 3,400 feet in length. There is no crossover or fence between the platforms, and this condition makes it necessary to cross the tracks in order to reach the south side, and also enables passengers to get on and off trains from between the tracks. Most of the

persons using this station are employees of a munitions manufacturing concern which has an entrance to its plant by means of a wooden stairway leading up a bank from the cinder platform adjacent to the north track. The railroad company has provided a shelter for passengers at another point on the north side of the tracks, but this is off its right of way and apparently is little used.

The munitions company workmen are nearly all residents of Cleveland, about 14½ miles west of East Bedford, and the Pennsylvania Railroad has on two occasions established a passenger service between these points, the last one having been in effect since November, 1917. This service is not shown on time tables, but is announced by means of a general notice posted on the bulletin boards in depots and stations. Railroad employees are required to be familiar with these notices, but do not sign for them, as in the case of general orders which are also bulletined but are acknowledged by being signed for. Both general notices and general orders are numbered serially beginning with the first day of each year, and in October, 1918, the latest general order of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Division was No. 98 and the latest general notice 103. The general notice covering the schedule of the East Bedford passenger train is No. 97.

The trains involved in this accident were passenger extra 7378 and regular passenger train No. 625.

Extra passenger train No. 7378 consisted of engine 7378, one open platform and five vestibule coaches, in charge of Conductor Francis and Engineer Liebtog. It left Cleveland,

en route for East Bedford, at 8.07 a.m., 13 minutes late, and arrived at East Bedford at about 8.53 a.m., 30 minutes late. Before it had come to a stop, some few passengers had already alighted and others were crossing the tracks from the north platform in order to get on board for the return trip. Just at this time westbound passenger train No. 835 ran into the crowd of persons scattered along the tracks.

Passenger train No. 835 consisted of engine 9713 and six cars, in charge of Conductor Sharpe and Engineer Finley. It left Columbus for Cleveland at 1.40 a.m., 30 minutes late, passed Wheelock, the last open telegraph office at 6.53 a.m., 13 minutes late, and about two miles further west passed passenger extra 7378 while running at a speed variously estimated from 35 to 60 miles an hour. A thick fog prevailed at the time.

Engineer Liebtog of passenger extra No. 7378 stated that he left Cleveland 8.07 a.m., 13 minutes late, and stopped at B. Q. tower, about 2 miles west of East Bedford and also at the first block east of Bedford station on account of the block signal being in stop position. Very foggy weather prevailed, and as he went along he sounded the whistle and proceeded with caution at a speed of from 5 to 6 miles an hour. When part way past the block signal he heard a train pass at a speed of from 35 to 30 miles an hour. He heard the fireman shout and later say: "They have killed a lot of people over there." After the westbound train passed he moved along about a train length to a point where he had made a mark to stop, and on signal did so. He did not hear No. 835 whistle, and as he pulled by the platform, quite a crowd was already getting on and running back and

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forth in front of the engine. He had frequently observed trains passing this point without being under control. He knew it to be the rule not to pass between a platform and a train discharging passengers unless everything was clear. Because of the character of the passengers, conditions at East Bedford are especially bad; they exercise little caution, constantly crowding and jumping through windows in getting on and off cars. He stated that on his runs speed was not the first consideration. His train was merely bulletined and not shown on time cards.

Conductor Francis of Extra 7378 stated that his train approached East Bedford at a speed of about six to eight miles an hour and he was getting ready to pull the bell cord for the enginemen to stop when the engine of train 625 went by and he saw bodies beginning to roll on the side he was on. His train stopped and 625 continued on through the fog. They were going, he thought, at a speed of about 45 miles an hour. He said there was no facility at this point for passengers to go from one platform to another, and he had been expecting something like this to happen because of the character of the passengers, who exercised little caution and got into and out of car windows before the train stopped. He had called attention to the danger. He also stated that he was acquainted with the rule requiring extra trains receiving or discharging passengers to see that they are protected against other trains, and had complied with this rule. In this case his flagman was prepared to protect the train as soon as it came to a stop. He stated that the East Bedford run is announced by means of a general notice, which employees are not required to sign for.

Fireman Ulich of extra 7378 stated that the weather at the time of the accident was very foggy; that the train stopped for a red block east of Bedford Station, then started again, and as they went along he started to ring the bell while the engineer blew the station whistle. As he looked ahead he saw an engine coming right on through the fog. In a moment he saw that something had happened and called out. He stated that under the rule, the westbound train should have been prepared to stop at this point. He did not hear No. 625 sound the whistle for the crossing or station and knew it to be a common practice with East Bedford passengers to climb through windows in getting on and off cars, even going so far as to climb over the trains. He was only slightly familiar with the general notice, No. 37, covering the schedule of his train, as employees are not furnished with copies, but are required to read them on the bulletin boards.

Head Brakeman Ducey of Extra 7378 stated that his train was within four car lengths of Bedford when No. 625 passed rapidly by in the fog. He was on the front steps of the car next the engine and had a flag and fusee in his hand ready to step off as soon as speed slackened. He was looking for the westbound train and just as he was ready to jump he saw the engine. It was going at perhaps 40 or 45 miles an hour; he did not hear it whistle, on account of the noise of his engine, but heard others say that it did so. The fog was so thick that he could not see more than 40 or 50 feet ahead. It was a frequent occurrence, he stated, for westbound trains to pass the station

while passengers were being loaded and unloaded on the north track, and he always protected his train. He stated that but few men had jumped off his train when it was passed by No. 625.

Brakeman Koubeck, who was acting as flagman on this run, stated that his train came into East Bedford at a speed of from two to five miles an hour, and that he did not see No. 625 coming, nor did he hear it whistle or ring the bell. When it passed he thought it was running at about 40 or 45 miles an hour, and stated that after running into the crowd it continued on for a distance of about 12 or 13 car lengths. He stated that it was customary for the flagman on a train stopping to receive or unload passengers to protect against approaching trains, and the rule also required approaching trains to be on the lookout for trains receiving and discharging passengers. He thought No. 625 should have approached prepared to meet the extra. He had not read the general notice containing the schedule of his train for some time. He also confirmed the statements of others that passengers at East Bedford do not confine themselves to the platforms in getting on and off cars. He had called attention to their disorderly conduct, but did not know that anything had been done.

Engineman Finley of No. 625 stated that he left Columbus, Ohio, for Cleveland, 1.40 a.m., 20 minutes late. The speed of his train was 40 miles an hour; the weather was foggy, and he slowed down for the crossing between Wheelock and East Bedford and sounded the whistle until he got over the crossing, applying the brakes lightly because of the fog. He sounded the whistle again at about the block signal and stated that he knew

about extra passenger 7378, but had no exact information of its schedule, though he recalled reading a notice regarding a change in its time. He did not approach East Bedford prepared to find this extra, as he had forgotten about it on this occasion. On account of the fog he could see no more than two or three car lengths ahead, and on approaching East Bedford he saw the men but not the train. He immediately applied the brakes in emergency, but did not have time to give any signal, running about two train lengths after applying the air. In passing Wheelock he could hardly see the block signal and would have gone by it, had it been against him because of having a clear block below. It was his custom to slow down when the home signal indicated stop, but when the distant signal was clear, he relied upon the home signal being clear. He was aware that Rule 153 required caution in passing a point where a passenger train is discharging or loading passengers, but on this particular morning, he did not have the rule in mind, nor did he recall whether bell was ringing when passing East Bedford. Had he not forgotten about the rule he would have approached prepared to stop. In running at a speed of 40 miles an hour approaching East Bedford he admitted that his train was not under control, but he was making up lost time and the passenger extra had slipped his mind. But for the fog he would have gone faster. He also stated that while the company has few general notions, it is difficult to remember all their schedules, particularly those of special trains, and the safer practice he thought would be to show trains on time card or by general order, which employees are required to sign for. He stated that where one train is go-

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ing west and another east, as in the present instance, he would expect the latter to flag against the former, but the westbound train must come prepared to stop whether flagged or not, as required by rule 153. He further stated that he never sounds the whistle for station signal on approaching East Bedford, and knew of no instructions demanding it, the only requirement being to sound the whistle for regular stations where a stop was to be made or mail picked up.

Conductor Sharpe of train No. 625 stated that the weather was very foggy and as his train passed the platform at East Bedford, he saw a crowd of men standing there and thought the East Bedford run had not yet arrived. He stated that it is customary to approach that point with caution, and the engineer whistled for the crossing about 2/3 of a mile from East Bedford, and then for the crossing beyond. The train was running from 35 to 40 miles an hour at the time of accident. He was thoroughly familiar with general notice 97 covering the schedule of Extra 7278 and could not see how the engineer overlooked it, particularly as they had met that train before and had been flagged by it, though not so late as on the present occasion. He thought the better practice would be to place extra and special trains on time card rather than burden conductor's and engineer's memory with many general notices. He had spoken to the engineer about slowing up at East Bedford on account of conditions there, and was familiar with rule 15<sup>th</sup> requiring a train not to pass a station on double track where another train is loading or unloading passengers. On account of his train being behind



time he did not expect to meet this extra. He said that on the night of October 1 he read the bulletin board together with the engineman and called the latter's attention to train arriving at East Bedford at 6.35 a.m. and intimated that there was a chance for trouble unless that train was looked out for. The fog was thickest, he thought, at East Bedford, but not so thick as to obscure the signals, though the engineman slowed down to see them.

Fireman Lacey of train No. 625 stated that his train left Columbus 20 minutes late and that some of the time was made up between Hudson and Bedford; when his train passed Wheelock, it was only six minutes late. He stated that he was familiar with the schedule of the extra passenger train, as it was on a general notice and he had read the notice at the Cleveland roundhouse. On approaching Wheelock the signals were clear; speed was reduced from 50 or 55 miles to between 35 and 40 miles an hour. The weather was very foggy and he could not see over 15 feet ahead of engine; he did not see the extra until close to it. Though it is customary on approaching East Bedford to have train under control, in compliance with rule 153, he stated that on account of being behind time the extra passenger was overlooked. After the accident his train ran about two train lengths. On account of the fog he was watching the signal and the East Bedford extra slipped his mind; until he passed the extra he did not notice people on the tracks.

Flagman Peyppe of train No. 625 stated that on account of the fog the speed was not as great as usual on approaching

East Bedford, being from 35 to 40 miles an hour. When nearing that point it was customary to reduce speed, and on previous occasions this had been done. He had not seen the bulletin containing the extra's schedule and his first intimation of the accident was when the brakes applied in emergency. The train continued on for several hundred feet thereafter, and he did not know whether the engineman blew the whistle or rung the bell for East Bedford station. He was familiar with rule 153, requiring trains to use caution in approaching a station where passengers were being picked up or unloaded.

Brakeman New of train No. 635 stated that his train was running between 40 and 45 miles an hour at time of the accident and continued moving for several hundred feet thereafter. He did not see the accident occur, but knew that on approaching East Bedford it is customary to be on the lookout. He did not know that recent changes had been made in the bulletin covering extra passenger 7378.

E. R. Howell, a clerk in the division freight agent's office of the Pennsylvania Railroad at Cleveland, who resides at East Bedford, stated that on the morning of the accident he was waiting to take the train to Cleveland with many others who were scattered along the cinder walk for a considerable distance. He heard No. 635 whistle, though he did not think others did, and immediately thereafter heard the whistle of Extra 7378. As the latter pulled up and before it stopped, the waiting men got up, crossed the tracks, and began to get on board. He saw the flagman of 7378 standing at the bottom step of coach next to en-

gine with a flag in each hand. He stated that No. 625 was at the time moving at about 40 miles an hour, although it was usual for westbound trains to operate when passing this point at a considerably reduced speed—about 13 to 15 miles an hour. A heavy fog prevailed, and he thought the men along the track couldn't see the westbound train and the engineer in turn couldn't see the men. When he first caught sight of No. 625 it was already plowing through the crowd.

Car Inspector McBane, a passenger on Extra 7378, stated that the train had not yet come to a stop when the accident happened. The grade at this point is conducive to high speed for westbound trains, though they usually pass East Bedford at about 10 to 15 miles an hour. He saw the brakeman on 7378 prepared to flag against 625, and stated that that train was running at from 35 to 40 miles an hour. He did not hear its whistle or bell.

Superintendent LeBoutillier of the C. & P. Division stated that he did not think it necessary to show the extra passenger on the regular time card, as constant changes are made in its schedule. He stated that the men ought to be familiar with its movements, and that occasional checks were made to ascertain if they are observing the rules. The matter of furnishing copies of the general notices to employees to attach to their time cards had been considered and would be put into effect soon. He was acquainted with the conditions at East Bedford, and stated that these conditions are merely temporary, as with the ending of the war there would probably be no occasion for running the passenger extra.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineer Finley and Conductor Sharpe of No. 625 to have their train under control when approaching East Bedford, as required by rule 153 of the book of rules of the Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh, which reads as follows:

"Trains must use caution in passing a train receiving or discharging passengers at a station, and must not pass between it and the platform at which the passengers are being received or discharged."

In view of the heavy fog existing at the time, extraordinary care should have been taken to see that this rule was complied with.

Censure also attaches to the railroad company for its failure properly to safeguard its passengers. In view of the large number of persons loaded and unloaded at this point, the company may properly have erected a fence between the tracks and a bridge overhead, or moved the station to some other point where proper facilities already exist or can be conveniently constructed.

Had the East Bedford special been shown on the working time card, or had the employees been furnished with copies of the general notice for reference, they would have been more familiar with the schedule.

All the employees involved were experienced men and none had been on duty more than seven hours at the time.

H.F.