

July 28, 1913.

In re Investigation of Accident on the Pennsylvania
Lines West of Pittsburgh at Woodville, Ohio,
on June 27th, 1913.

On June 27, 1913, there was a head-and collision between a passenger train and a work train, on the Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh, at Woodville, Ohio, resulting in the death of 2 employees and the injury of 9 passengers and 15 employees.

After investigation the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances reports as follows:

At the point where this accident occurred the railroad is a single track line operated under the manual block system. An automatic signal, controlled by track circuit, is installed approximately 3000 feet east of Woodville station. This signal displays a caution indication for engineers on westbound trains in case the track between the station and signal is occupied by a car or train, or either of the two switches in this section is open; these switches are not automatically locked. This signal does not relieve train crews of the duty of protecting their trains by flag.

The collision occurred about 600 feet east of Woodville station, and 300 feet east of the east switch of the passing track. There is a 3-1/2 degree curve, 750 feet in length, extending eastward from a point about 200 feet east of the place where the accident occurred. At the place where the accident occurred, however, the track is straight and practically level.

Westbound passenger train No. 419, consisting of an engine and 5 cars, with Conductor Daly and Engineman Brown in charge, left Mansfield, Ohio, at 1:29 p.m., 29 minutes late, and passed G B tower, the last telegraph station east of the point where the accident occurred, at 3:42 p.m., leaving Gibsonburg, a regular station stop, five miles from Woodville, at 3:46 p.m., and collided with work train extra 9367 at 3:53 p.m. Before passing the automatic signal east of Woodville the speed of this train was approximately 60 miles per hour, but when the train reached the curve the speed had been reduced to 45 or 48 miles per hour and at the time of the accident it was about 30 miles per hour. Approaching Woodville the view was obstructed by trees on the inside of the curve, and the engine crew could not see the work train until within about 675 feet of it.

Extra 9367, with Conductor Webber and Engineman Emery in charge, held an order directing this train to work extra between Walbridge and Woodville from 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. At 3:31 p.m. the crew in charge of this train received a copy of an

order, at Webbs, 5.3 miles from Woodville, directing trains 419, 413, 427 and 437 to wait at Woodville until 3:50 p.m., for extra 9367 east. The work extra proceeded to Woodville and entered the passing track at the west switch, 3847 feet west of the station, clearing the main track at 3:42 p.m., and the train, which at that time consisted of an engine, one car and a caboose, proceeded through the passing track to the passenger station.

Telegraph operators are employed at Woodville passenger station, but this is not a block station, the block signal office being located opposite the west end of the passing track. Telephones communicating with the block office are located on the north side of the passing track opposite the station and in the telegraph office at the station.

When the work train stopped at Woodville, the conductor, instead of communicating with the block office, asked the telegraph operator in the station to find out where No. 419 was; the operator had finished his work and was preparing to leave the station; he told the conductor it was not his business to secure this information, but finally he did communicate with the dispatcher by telegraph and then told Conductor Webber that No. 419 was not out of G B tower. The conductor conveyed this information to the engineman, who called to the operator asking if it was correct, and the operator assured him that it was. The work train then proceeded out on the main track, the intention being to back down the main track and head into the west end of the house track for the purpose of picking up a car. The work train has just started out on the main track when the collision occurred.

Rule No. 365 provides that when a train clears a block between block stations, the conductor or the engineman must report clear to the signalman and a train must not again enter the block without proper signals or permission from the signalman. The conductor and engineman of the work train failed to obey this rule; the conductor stated that it was customary with local trains to make movements such as his train had started to make in this case, upon information obtained from the dispatcher, and he thought it proper to make this move.

The conductor stated that when his train entered a siding at a point where a block office is located he did not report his train into clear, but when entering a siding from the other end it was customary to report the train into clear, and before going out of a siding to call up the block operator; the reason he did not call up the operator in this case was because it was more convenient to make his inquiry at the telegraph office and in order to make the proposed

movement he said "I expected I had to hurry."

The engineman and fireman of the passenger train both stated that the automatic signal east of Woodville was in the clear position as their train approached, both of them calling this signal. It is apparent, therefore, that the switch at the east end of the passing track was open, to permit the work train to proceed out on to the main track, after the passenger train passed the automatic signal.

It is evident that there was a misunderstanding between the operator at Woodville and the dispatcher. The operator said the dispatcher informed him that No. 419 had not yet passed G B tower but would be out of there in a few minutes; and the dispatcher said he told the operator that No. 419 had passed G B tower and would be there (Woodville) in a few minutes.

This accident was caused by the work train occupying the main track on the time of a superior train without protection, for which the conductor and engineman were primarily responsible.

Regardless of any information furnished by the operator at the passenger station, this train had no right to occupy the main track on the time of the opposing trains without flag protection or orders authorizing this movement. The Conductor's statement that he thought he had to hurry is an indication that he realized he was taking a chance. The practice of making movements of this character under circumstances similar to those which surrounded and led up to this accident is fraught with extreme danger, and as long as railroad employees persist in taking chances of this nature similar accidents may be expected to occur. The rules which are provided for the safety of railroad operation should not be lightly disregarded merely for the purpose of saving time.

All the employees involved in this accident were experienced men, and none of them was on duty contrary to the provisions of the hours of service law.