

In Re investigation of accident which
occurred on the Philadelphia &
Reading Railway near Hoyers-
ford, Pa., on December 9,
1914.

On December 9, 1914, there was a side collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Philadelphia & Reading Railway near Hoyersford, Pa., which resulted in the death of both enginesmen and the injury of both firemen and two passengers. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Division of Safety reports as follows:

Southbound freight train extra 1599 consisted of 60 loaded cars and a caboose, hauled by locomotive No. 1599, and was in charge of Conductor Reider and Enginesman Fisher. It left Tamaqua, Pa., at 1.20 a.m.; passed Linfield, the last telegraph office approaching the point of accident, at 5.13 a.m., running on the southbound slow-speed track. It stopped to take water at a point about 2,700 feet north of the cross-over at which the accident afterwards occurred. After taking water the train proceeded toward the cross-over diverting it from the southbound slow-speed track to the southbound high-speed track, and while the engine was on the cross-over, moving at a low rate of speed, it was struck by southbound passenger train No. 14.

Passenger train No. 14 consisted of one combination baggage and express car, two coaches and one Pullman sleeping car, hauled by locomotive No. 650 and was in charge of Conductor Ivory and Enginesman Springer. It passed Linfield at 5.33 a.m. and collided with extra 1599 at about 5.40 a.m.

Both locomotives were overturned, one on one side of the track and one on the other, the passenger locomotive coming to a stop at a point about 200 feet beyond the point of collision. Slight damage

was sustained by the first two cars of the passenger train and the first car of the freight train.

This part of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway is a four-track road, train movements being protected by the automatic block signal system, standing normally at danger. The track approaching the point of accident from the north is straight for more than one mile. All main track switches are equipped with switch indicators to show the condition of the blocks on either side of the switches. The switch at the point of accident is between the southbound high and low-speed tracks, the switch lamp being on the right side of the low-speed track.

Brakeman Snyder, of extra 1599, stated that when the train started after having taken water he was told by the engineman to run ahead and line up the switches so that it would not be necessary to stop the heavy train again. Brakeman Snyder asked him if anything was due and claims that the engineman said, "No, 14 is gone." Brakeman Snyder then went ahead and opened the first of the two switches. After he had opened the switch he heard the conductor call to the engineman and saw him swinging his lantern. He looked back and saw the headlight of the locomotive hauling train No. 14 about 30 car lengths distant. He then ran in front of the engine of extra 1599 and began signalling the engineman but apparently the latter did not recognize his signals. Brakeman Snyder further stated that before opening the switch he did not look at the switch indicator to see if any train was in the block and stated that he did not know what purpose the indicator served. In response to further questioning, he said that although he had been a brakeman for two years, he had never been examined on the rules governing the operation of trains, signals, etc.

Conductor Meider stated that when his train stopped to take

water he started for the head end, walking on the left side of the track. When he was about 15 car lengths from the locomotive the train started to pull ahead and he boarded it at that point and began to walk forward over the tops of the cars. At this time the automatic signal near the water tank, governing the high-speed track, showed white and green, indicating that a southbound train was approaching, being at that time in the second block to the rear. When he had reached the fifth car from the engine he saw that the engine was going to pull out on to the high-speed track. He at once got off the train on the right side and began to signal the engineman, at the same time calling to him in the endeavor to attract his attention. In addition to train No. 14, second-class train No. 58, due at Royersford at 4.59 a.m. had not arrived, and in the absence of any orders regarding these trains, his train had no right to occupy the high-speed track on their time. Conductor Reider further stated that during the time his train had been running on the low-speed track no trains had passed them on the high-speed track which could have been mistaken for passenger train No. 14.

The speed of train No. 14 at the time of the accident is believed to have been about 20 miles per hour, inasmuch as the fireman states that the engineman had shut off steam in readiness to make the scheduled stop at Royersford station, only a few hundred feet beyond the switch at which the accident occurred.

This accident was caused by extra 1599 occupying the high-speed track on the time of a superior train, for which engineman Fisher and Brakeman Snyder are responsible. Engineman Fisher, if the statement of Brakeman Snyder is correct, apparently had for some unknown

reason been of the opinion that train No. 14 had gone. Regardless of this fact, however, he should have known that train No. 58, which was a superior train, had not yet passed and that by pulling his train out on to the high-speed track, as he did, he would be occupying that track on the time of that train. How he came to overlook both train No. 14 and train No. 58 cannot be explained. It is possible that the automatic block signal did not show white and green at the time his locomotive passed it, in which event the only warning of the approaching train would have been the position of the switch indicator. If the automatic block signal did show white and green, however, it indicated that a train was approaching and Engineman Fisher is further at fault for disregarding this signal indication. The actions of Brakeman Snyder indicated a peculiar disregard for all rules and practices governing the safe operation of trains. This switch was equipped with a switch indicator, intended to meet exactly the situation which existed in this case, and yet Brakeman Snyder, according to his own statement failed to observe the indicator. Had he taken even this ordinary precaution, this accident undoubtedly would not have occurred. It will be noted that he states he did not know what these indicators were for, but it is inconceivable that any man could be employed on a railroad in the capacity of brakeman for a period of two years without knowing the purpose switch indicators are intended to serve.

When he saw train No. 14 approaching, Brakeman Snyder could easily have prevented the accident. He was standing at the switch when his attention was called to the fact that train No. 14 was approaching, and all he had to do was to close it. Had he done so, this would have allowed extra 1597 to continue on the slow-speed track, without interfering in any way with train No. 14.

This investigation would seem to indicate that the officials of this railway have not taken the proper steps to insure that all employees are acquainted with and understand the rules governing the operation of trains and signals.

Engineman Fisher was employed as a brakeman in March, 1905, being transferred to the position of fireman about a month afterwards. He was promoted to engineman in freight service in March, 1912. His record was good. Brakeman Snyder was employed as such in December, 1912, and had a good record. Both of the men had been on duty 5 hours and 40 minutes, after a period off duty of 8 hours and 30 minutes.