

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON
THE LINE OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMPANY NEAR
CHEMAWA, ORE., ON NOVEMBER 24, 1920.

March 12, 1921.

On November 24, 1920, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the line of the Southern Pacific Company near Chemawa, Ore., which resulted in the injury of 4 employees and 2 trespassers. The investigation of this accident was held in conjunction with representatives of the Public Service Commission of Oregon, and as a result of this investigation the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

Location.

This accident occurred on the Junction City subdivision of the Portland Division, extending between Portland and Junction City, Ore., a distance of 110.4 miles. In the territory in which this accident occurred this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders, no block-signal system being in use. The accident occurred about 1,300 feet east of the east team-track switch at Chemawa. Approaching the point of accident from the east the track is tangent for about 4,300 feet. The grade is 1 per cent descending for about 3,000 feet, followed by 1,300 feet of level track extending to the point of accident, which is on a fill about 20 feet in height. The weather at the time of the accident was very foggy.

Description.

Westbound freight train No. 227 consisted of 30 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 2329, and was in charge

of Conductor Record and Engineman Senders. It left Woodburn at 12.15 am., made two stops en route, and at about 1.40 a.m. stopped with the engine just east of the east team-track switch at Chemawa. At about 1.45 a.m. the rear end of the train was struck by train second No. 221.

Westbound freight train second No. 221 consisted of 37 cars and caboose, hauled by engine 2320, and was in charge of Conductor Strange and Engineman Parker. It left Woodburn at 1.00 a.m., made no stops en route, and collided with the rear end of train No. 227 while travelling at a speed estimated to have been about 20 miles an hour.

The caboose and six cars on the rear end of train No. 227 were destroyed or badly damaged. Engine 2320 came to rest on its right side, at the bottom of the fill, about 200 feet beyond the point of accident. The first three cars were derailed, the first two being destroyed by fire which broke out in the wreckage.

Summary of evidence.

At Woodburn Conductor Record told Flagman Christian that train second No. 221 was following them and that if it overtook them to head it in on a passing track and have it run around their train. The conductor then boarded the engine, on which he rode from Woodburn to Chemawa. When the train stopped at that point Conductor Record said he personally sounded the whistle signal for the flagman to protect the train, after which the members of the crew on the head end of the train attended to the unloading of some freight and knew

nothing about the approach of train second No. 221 until the accident occurred. Conductor Record thought that they had been unloading freight about 5 or 6 minutes when the accident occurred, Head Brakeman McMullen and Middle Brakeman Royce thought the train had been at Chemawa about 5 minutes before the accident occurred, while Engineman Senders and Fireman Earl estimated this time to have been from 8 to 10 minutes. Although Flagman Christian knew that there was work to be done at Chemawa he did not throw off a fusee when approaching the station. According to his own statement he had gotten back only 300 or 400 feet when he saw train second No. 221 approaching and he said he had reached a point 600 or 700 feet from the rear of his train when the engine passed him. He did not light a fusee until he saw the train coming and he said that when it was close to him his stop signals were acknowledged by the engineman. He thought his own train had been standing about 4 minutes when the accident occurred. The statements of Flagman Christian also indicated that when working with Conductor Record on previous occasions he had been instructed about dropping fusees between stations in foggy weather, and he said he thought about dropping off a fusee when his train was approaching Chemawa but did not realize that train second No. 221 was following his train so closely.

According to Engineman Parker, of train second No. 221, he had made an application of the brakes in the vicinity of a slow board located about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from where the rear end of train No. 227 was standing. His first intimation of danger

was when he saw Flagman Christian light a fusee and at about the same time saw the markers on the rear of the train ahead, he immediately applied the air brakes in emergency. Engineman Parker thought the flagman was not more than 300 feet from the caboose. He said he had sounded the whistle several times for road crossings after leaving Brooks, 3.6 miles from Chemawa, as well as a station whistle signal for the station at Chemawa. His statements were practically corroborated by Fireman McIver, Head Brakeman Ball and Middle Brakeman Smith, all of whom were riding on the engine.

Conclusions.

This accident was caused by the failure of Flagman Christian, of train No. 227, properly to protect his train

The evidence clearly indicates that Flagman Christian had ample time in which to protect his train, and according to his own statements he was back a distance of only 300 or 400 feet when he heard train second No. 221 approaching and was only 600 or 700 feet from his train when the following train passed him. No excuse can be offered for the negligence displayed by Flagman Christian in not going back as far as possible in the time at his disposal. Not only was Flagman Christian negligent in this respect, but in view of the weather conditions a proper regard for safety should have prompted him to throw off a lighted fusee when his train was approaching Chemawa.

Flagman Christian was employed as a brakeman in January, 1920, after about 1 month's service as a student

brakeman, his record was clear.

The crews of both of the trains involved in this accident had been on duty approximately 4 hours after about 10 hours off duty.