

November 20, 1912.

In re investigation of accident on the Western Maryland Railroad, at Kobeen, Pa., October 7, 1912.

On October 7, 1912, there was a head end collision between a freight train and a train consisting of empty passenger cars, on the Western Maryland Railroad at Kobeen, Pa., resulting in the death of four employees and the injury of four employees.

After investigation I beg to submit the following report:

This collision occurred on the lines of the Western Maryland Railroad at Kobeen siding, and the trains involved were Philadelphia & Reading extra No. 988 west, and Western Maryland extra No. 513 east. There is an agreement between the Philadelphia & Reading and Western Maryland companies under which train crews of both companies run between Rutherford, Pa., and Hagerstown, Md., over the Philadelphia & Reading and the Western Maryland tracks. At the time of this collision P. & R. extra No. 988 was running over the lines of the Western Maryland and as the conductor of this train was not familiar with the track a pilot had been furnished.

Conductor Schieb and Engineman Bream were in charge of extra No. 988, and Conductor Schieb was notified before leaving Rutherford that Frank Krause would pilot his train over the Western Maryland from Lurgan, Pa., the junction point, to Hagerstown, Md. Pilot Krause had

formerly been Conductor Schieb's regular flagman.

Extra No. 988 left Rutherford at 12:40 a. m., October 7, with 42 empty cars in the train. Pilot Krause was picked up at P. H. & P. Junction, getting on the caboose at that point. At Moores' Hill, about 15 miles from Lurgan, he told Conductor Schieb that he, Krause, was in charge of the train from Lurgan to Hagerstown and that Schieb should cook breakfast. Krause then went ahead and rode to Lurgan on the engine.

This train arrived at Lurgan at 4:15 a. m. Conductor Schieb remained in the caboose, leaving the conductor's duties to be discharged by Pilot Krause. Shortly after arrival at Lurgan, engineman Bream went into the office. Pilot Krause had preceded him, and together they checked the train register. The engineman then went back to his engine where he did some work and ate a lunch; then he walked down the track a short distance, and came back and went into a closet. After the engineman left, pilot Krause remained in the office waiting for orders; while the engineman was still in the closet the pilot came out with orders and called to the engineman that it was all right to go. As the engineman returned to the engine he saw the fireman reading the orders; after the engineman got on the tender, Pilot Krause read the orders to the engineman and then handed them to him. The engineman then read the orders back to the pilot. Two of these orders were as follows:

Train order No. 14

To C. & E. Engine 313
All Trains West

Engine 313 will run extra leaving Shippensburg Monday Oct. 7th as follows with right over all trains. Leave Shippensburg 5:35 a. m., Lurgan 5:40, Kobeen, 5:45 a. m., Culbertson 5:50 a. m., Siloam 5:55 a. m., arrive Brandon 6:05 a. m.

Train order No. 18.

To C. & E. Engine 988

Engine 988 will run extra Lurgan to Hagerstown, keeping clear extra 313 east. Extra 988 west will meet 3th 352 org. 1878 at Culbertson and has right over let 328 Lurgan to Brandon.

After reading these orders engineman Broom asked Pilot Krause concerning extra 313 east, and Krause replied that it was all right to go. Engineman Broom stated that he asked Pilot Krause about this train twice afterwards and received the same reply. The third time he called over the boiler to Pilot Krause and asked, "Is it all right to go?" Krause replied, "It is all right to go". Head brakeman Shunk heard this last question and answer. Thinking that extra 313 had passed while he was in the cleft, engineman Broom started the train and it proceeded on its way.

Western Maryland extra No. 313, with Conductor McClain and engineman Teeland in charge, left Hagerstown, Md., at 3:22 a. m., October 7, with a train of seven empty passenger cars. Extra 313 east had no orders which in any way restricted its rights with respect to extra 988 west. At 5:05 a. m., this train passed Culbertson, a station about three miles west of the point where the accident occurred and at about 5:10 a. m.

collided with extra 980.

At this point the railroad is a single track line. There is a curve toward the south of about three degrees and at this point there is a dip in the track with a slight descending grade in both directions. Looking west from the scene of the accident there is a clear view for about half a mile, but looking east the view is obstructed by trees for a distance of about 650 feet, extending from the point where the accident occurred to the beginning of Kobsen siding. There was a heavy fog at this place at the time of the accident.

This accident was caused by failure of the crew of extra No. 980 to obey the order requiring them to keep their train clear of extra 315. The responsibility for the accident rests primarily upon Conductor Schieb for not performing his duties as conductor at Lurgan, and upon Pilot Krause and Engineman Green for failure to observe order No. 18.

This investigation disclosed the fact that in issuing order No. 18 the dispatcher directed Operator Boyles to make only three copies. The rules of the company provide that train orders shall be addressed to the conductor and engineman of a train and also "to any one who acts as its pilot", and a copy must be furnished to each person addressed. The order should have been directed, therefore, to the conductor, engineman and

pilot, instead of only to the conductor and engineman, and four copies should have been made. The dispatcher was aware of the fact that there was a pilot on No. 908, but stated that it was customary to issue orders only to the conductor and engineman and to direct three copies to be made. But the failure to live up to this rule in this case had no bearing upon this accident as Conductor Schieb did not go to the office for orders. The rule requiring the engineman to read orders to the conductor was not obeyed in this case, and in signing for orders the pilot signed both his own name and the name of Conductor Schieb.

Order No. 18 as delivered to the crew of No. 908 was not complete, the operator having failed to record this order as complete and to sign the order. The dispatcher's order book and the operator's file copy show that "complete" was given at 4:47 a. m., but "complete" was not recorded on the copies held by Pilot Krause and Engineman Drost. Under the rules this made it a holding order for the train, but the pilot and the engineman overlooked the fact that this order was not complete.

As a preventive of such accidents the installation of some form of block system is recommended. This accident again calls attention to the weaknesses of the train order system and the chances of errors leading to

disastrous consequences which may arise under this system. It is believed that the only permanent and adequate cure for the bad practices disclosed by this investigation is the adoption of the block system.