

MEMORANDUM TO COMMISSIONER McCHORD:

Relative to accident on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Ry., December 9, 1911.

Draft submitted by the Chief Inspector of Safety Appliances as a basis for the report of the Commission.

January 19, 1912.

On December 9, 1911, a head-on collision occurred on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway at Corliss, Wis. No telegraphic report of this accident was received by the Commission. Investigation developed the fact that a telegram was written by the railway company, but in some manner failed to be delivered to the telegraph company for transmission. Inspector Merrill was in the vicinity at the time and made an investigation. A synopsis of his report is given below.

Engine No. 849 left Beloit, Wis., at 6 a. m., December 9, hauling Racine & Southwestern Division train No. 96, in charge of Conductor Yerrick and Engineer Forbush. On its arrival at Corliss, engine No. 849 set out its train and received orders to run as an extra from Corliss to Stowell, a station near Milwaukee on the Chicago and Milwaukee Division, Corliss being the junction of the two divisions. Extra No. 849 left the yard with a caboose and proceeded to wards the wye leading to the east-bound track of the C. & M. Division. It was then intended to cross over to the west-bound track and proceed to Stowell. After taking water at the water tank, located beside the wye, extra No. 849 proceeded toward the eastbound track, on reaching which it collided with east-bound passenger train No. 12.

Train No. 12 was in charge of Conductor Sweeney and Engineer Haddock, and consisted of 2 baggage cars, 1 smoking car, 1 coach, 1 dining car and 1 parlor car, hauled by engine No. 946. This train left Milwaukee about 5:45 p. m., four minutes late, and was due at Corliss at 6:21 p. m. When it reached the switch at the junction of the wye with the east-bound track, at about 6:23 p. m., it collided with extra No. 849.

This collision caused the death of the engineer and injuries to the fireman of extra No. 849, as well as injuries to the engine men, conductor, baggageman, one brakeman and one waiter of train No. 12, and three passengers. Both engines are derailed and quite badly damaged, engine No. 946 being thrown down a 10-foot embankment. The cars of train No. 12 were only slightly damaged. The speed of train No. 12 at the time of the collision was about 20 miles per hour, while the speed of extra No. 849 was about 4 miles per hour.

The Chicago and Milwaukee Division of the C. M. & St. P. Ry. is a double track line, crossing the tracks of the Racine & South-

western Division to the east-bound track of the Chicago & Milwaukee Division. After reaching this east-bound track, trains can cross over to the west-bound track and then proceed towards Milwaukee. The junction of the wye with the east-bound track is protected by a home signal, which is located about 2,550 feet west of the switch. About a mile west of this home signal is located a distant signal. When the switch is open it automatically sets the home signal at danger and the distant signal at caution, thus warning approaching trains that the wye switch is in use. At the switch is located a switch indicator, which is so connected electrically that when an approaching east-bound train reaches a point about 2,000 feet west of the distant signal, the indicator will show stop. If this switch indicator shows clear, it indicates that no train is nearer than 2,000 feet west of the distant signal.

Fireman Siber, of extra No. 849, stated that after taking water and receiving orders, Engineman Forbush started his train toward the east-bound track of the C. & M. Division. Siber's attention was first attracted to the approach of No. 12 when he heard a long whistle; he was not sure what train it was, but on looking out he saw the headlight of train No. 12 and called to Engineman Forbush to jump, at the same time jumping from the engine-man's side of the engine. Prior to this time, Fireman Siber stated that he did not know of the location of train No. 12, and supposed that the men in charge of his train knew what they were doing. He further stated that when making this movement the custom has been to use the block signals as the only protection, although he knew that the rules provided that cross-over movements should be protected by flagging.

Conductor Yerrick, of extra No. 849, stated that while his crew was setting out the train in the yard, he went to the station for his orders. After getting the orders he left the station at 6:17 p. m., and went to where engine No. 849 was standing, at the water tank, delivered orders to the engineman and talked with him for two or three minutes. The switches were lined up before starting, and the conductor noticed that the first two switches were ready for the cross-over movement; he did not give any instructions to his brakemen as to flagging. He admitted that he had forgotten about train No. 12, and stated that when in the telegraph office he only checked the register for west-bound trains. He also stated that he had never been examined on the automatic block signal rules, and when questioned as to the general practice as to flagging at this point when making cross-over movements, stated that he understood that the automatic signals would protect his train.

Head Brakeman Sarver, of extra No. 849, stated that he threw the first two switches, at the same time noticing by the indicator that the block was clear, and that extra No. 849 started ahead about five minutes after he threw the switch. Brakeman Sarver had been in the service of this railroad three months and had never been supplied with a copy of the automatic block signal rules or manual block signal rules in use. He also stated that he had never been furnished with a time card, which contains the general rules,

although on several different occasions he had asked to be furnished with a copy. As a consequence he did not even know that train No. 12 was on the schedule. He had had several years' experience with the Pennsylvania Railroad, and stated that on that railroad he would not have done any flagging under like circumstances. In this connection, it might be well to state that if a standard code of rules was in use upon all the railroads of the country, the opportunity of mistakes occurring on account of varying rules could be obviated.

Rear Brakeman Brinkman stated that while the head brakeman was throwing the fl at two switches, he went ahead and threw the third switch, not looking at any of the switch indicators, and that extra No. 849 did not move until after the switches were thrown. Soon after he threw the switch he heard one long whistle and saw the headlight of train No. 12. He stated that no flagging precautions were taken, and that he had forgotten about train No. 12 until he saw it coming.

Engineman Haddock, of train No. 12, stated that when he passed the distant signal it was set at clear. At this time the speed of his train was about 55 miles per hour. Just before reaching the home signal, at which time the speed of his train was about 60 miles per hour, he started to apply the air brakes, and when he passed the signal, which was set at danger, he states that he at once made an emergency application of the air brakes, and that he jumped when he saw extra No. 849 on the track in front of him. He further stated that on account of the dense fog prevailing at the time, he was not able to see the signals until he was within a distance of about two car lengths of them.

When Operator Stake Miller, at Corliss, was questioned, it was found that he did not have a carbon copy of the clearance card issued to the conductor of extra No. 849. It appeared that it was the custom at this station to keep only copies of permissive cards and cards involving meeting points, although the rules of the company require that a copy be kept of all clearance cards. He stated that the conductor asked him nothing as to east-bound trains, and he said nothing to the conductor about No. 12, although he knew that it had just passed the last block station before reaching Corliss.

The weather at the time of the accident was extremely foggy, it being impossible to see a distance of more than two or three car lengths, and the rails were very slippery. Bulletins calling attention to the thick fog prevailing had been posted a few hours prior to the time of the accident. These bulletins were addressed to all conductors and enginemen, and the conductor of train No. 12 called Engineman Haddock's attention to these bulletin instructions before leaving Milwaukee.

This accident was caused by the failure of the crew of extra No. 849 to remember train No. 12 and to properly protect their train while making a cross-over movement. A contributing cause was the failure of the engineman of train No. 12 to so regulate the

speed of his train as to be able to observe and be governed by signals provided for the purpose of preventing accidents of this character. This investigation develops the fact that the conductor in charge of the freight train has never been examined on the automatic block signal rules, and from the statements of this train crew it was not the custom for them to protect their trains while making this cross-over movement, although required by the rules to do so. It also appears that one of the brakemen, although in service three months, had never been furnished with a time card, although he had made several requests for it. These time cards contain the schedules of trains and the general rules of the company.

This accident occurred at a point protected by an automatic block signal system, specially provided to meet the conditions existing at this junction point. Until this company furnishes copies of its rules to its employees, and the officials know that the employees thoroughly understand them, freight trains are liable to attempt cross-over movements under similar circumstances. To insure greater safety, however, it is obvious that some adequate system of train control must be adopted to prevent engines from passing signals set against them.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of
Safety Appliances.