

November 7, 1913.

No. 155.

In re investigation of accident at Waukeska, Wis., on the  
Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste Marie Railway, August 5, 1913.

On August 5, 1913, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a switch engine on the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste Marie Railway at Waukeska, Wis., resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

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

At the place where the accident occurred the railway is a single-track line. Freight train No. 23 consisted of a locomotive, 37 loaded cars, 6 empty cars and a caboose, all except two of the cars in an train being equipped with air brakes in working condition. Switch engine No. 2611 was pulling a string of 26 cars out of a siding when it was struck by freight train No. 23. The accident occurred at about 9:30 a.m.; at that time the weather was clear.

Westbound freight train No. 23 left Vernon, Wis., 6.8 miles east of Waukeska, at 9:11 a.m. On this road locomotives are equipped with speed recorders but in the collision the recorder was knocked off from the locomotive of train No. 23 and it was impossible to tell how fast that train had been running between Vernon and Waukeska.

East of Waukeska there is a grade of about 1 per cent, descending for westbound trains. On this grade the yard limit board is located, and about 700 feet east of the yard limit board there is a bridge. Between this bridge and the point where the accident occurred there is a four-degree curve. Engineman Hall of train No. 23 stated that as the train approached Waukeska its speed was between 12 and 15 miles an hour. Just after passing down the grade he shut off steam, drifting down the hill, and at that time also he sounded the station whistle signal.

After passing the yard limit board and just before reaching the bridge Engineman Hall made a service application of the brakes, reducing the train line pressure 10 pounds. When he first saw engine No. 2611 Engineman Hall thought it was going in on the siding and getting out of the way of his train, but when his train had proceeded around the curve he saw that it was coming out of the siding toward him. He made another reduction of 10 pounds and sounded the highway crossing whistle signal. When he saw that the switch engine had not been stopped and that his train could not be stopped before reaching it he made an emergency application of the brakes and opened the sander on his engine. As his train approached the switch engine he jumped off and ran forward, calling to the engineman of the switch engine.

(2)

Fireman Joseph of train No. 23 stated that he did not see the switch engine until after the engineman had applied the brakes in emergency. He stated that the train had been running at a low rate of speed, and that while approaching the scene of the accident the engineman had applied the brakes and sounded the station whistle signal and the highway crossing signal.

Conductor Brunst of train No. 23 stated that he was riding on the fireman's seat as the train approached Waukeska. He estimated that the speed of the train was 15 or 20 miles an hour when it started down the grade east of Waukeska. After the engineman had applied the brakes in emergency he saw the switch engine coming toward his train 25 or 30 car lengths away. He stated that he said nothing to Engineman Hall at the time, as he expected the engineman of the switch engine to see his train and to stop. At the time the brakes were applied in emergency he thought the speed of the train was 12 or 15 miles per hour.

Coal Brakeman Spencer of train No. 23, who was riding on the engine as the train approached Waukeska, stated that he jumped off with the engineman just before the collision occurred and that both of them ran ahead for the purpose of warning the men on the switch engine. He stated that at that time train No. 23 was moving just about as fast as a man could walk.

Engineman Toll of switch engine No. 2611 said that his engine was pulling a string of empty gondola cars out of a siding at a speed of about 4 or 5 miles an hour. During this movement he had been looking eastward to see whether or not any trains were approaching; just at the time of the collision, however, his string of cars had cleared the switch and he was about to start these cars toward the east when the collision occurred. He thought his train was standing still when it was struck. He said he did not hear train No. 23 whistle and before the collision occurred he had no warning that the train was approaching.

Switch Foreman Koil, who was in charge of switch engine 2611, stated that this engine was backing out of a transfer track when the collision occurred. He was on the rear car at that time and thought that the cars had been moving at the rate of 5 or 6 miles an hour. He heard train No. 23 whistle and saw that train when it was 12 or 15 car lengths away from switch engine No. 2611. He thought train No. 23 would stop and let the switch engine get out of the way.

From observations made after the accident occurred it appears that Engineman Hall had a clear view of the switch engine for 1,100 feet; and Engineman Toll had a clear view of train No. 23 for at least 900 feet after his engine backed out of the siding.

Rule No. 93, governing the movements of yard engines, reads as follows:

(3)

"Within yard limits the main track may be used, protecting against first class trains.

"Second and third class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear."

Under this rule switch engine No. 2611 had the right to occupy the main track on the time of train No. 23, that train being third-class, and Engineman Hall should have had train No. 23 under complete control. Engineman Hall stated that he passed the yard limit board before making the first application of the brakes. He said the train brakes were in good condition and admitted that he could have stopped his train long before he did, but he thought the switch engine was moving in the opposite direction and he apparently assumed that the switch engine would get in out of his way. Having used the brakes to check the speed of the train while drifting down the grade east of the point where the accident occurred, Engineman Hall had so reduced his train line pressure that the emergency application of the brakes had little or no effect.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineman Hall properly to control the speed of his train within yard limits as required by Rule No. 93.

Engineman Hall has been employed on this road as an engineman for 4 7/8 yrs and 4 months, and as a fireman before that for about 5 years. At the time of the accident he had been on duty 8 hours and 30 minutes after a period off duty of 14 hours.