

No. 126

May 1, 1913.

In re investigation of Accident on the Chicago and North Western Railway near Goose Lake, Iowa, on February 26, 1913.

On February 26, 1913, there was an accident on the Chicago & North Western Railway at Goose Lake, Iowa, resulting in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 13 passengers and 3 employees.

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

The trains involved in this collision were westbound passenger train No. 141, running from Clinton, Iowa, to Anamosa, Iowa, and eastbound freight train No. 144, running from Anamosa to Clinton. Train No. 141 consisted of 1 combination baggage, mail, and express car, 1 smoking car, and 1 coach, all the cars being of wooden construction, and was hauled by engine No. 807. Conductor Strickland and Engineer Hunt were in charge of this train. Train No. 144 consisted of 8 loaded and 13 empty cars, 1 baggage car, and 1 coach, hauled by engines Nos. 1235 and 532. Conductor Roberts and Engineer Lillis and Tracer were in charge of this train.

Train No. 141 left Clinton, its eastern terminus, at 5:10 pm, and left Bryant, the last station east of Goose Lake, at 5:55 pm, on time. This train is due to leave Goose Lake at 6:00 pm, and while approaching that station at a speed of about 30 miles per hour, the engine crew saw the freight train occupying the main track. The brakes were at once applied, and the speed reduced to 10 or 15 miles per hour at the time of the collision, which occurred at 5:58 pm.

Train No. 144 left Anamosa at 1:00 pm, and arrived at Goose Lake at 5:35 pm. The time table prescribes a meeting point for trains Nos. 141 and 144 at Bryant, a station 2.6 miles east of Goose Lake, and these trains usually meet there. On the day of the collision train No. 144 was unable to complete its work at Goose Lake in time to meet train No. 141 at Bryant, and it was while this work was being done, with the two engines and one or two cars out beyond the east switch onto the main track, that the collision occurred.

Engines Nos. 807 and 1235 are considerably damaged, while engine No. 532 sustained very slight damage. The weather was cloudy and a few flakes of snow were falling. It was still light enough to see without the aid of lanterns.

The Chicago & North Western Railway between Clinton and Anamosa is a single-track line. A telegraphic block system is in use

(a)

between 7 am and 7 pm, so operated as to provide protection for train movements in both directions. Approaching Goose Lake from the east there is a curve to the left of two degrees and twelve minutes about 1,100 feet long; then there is about 700 feet of straight track extending to the east switch. The point of collision was about 150 feet east of this switch. The curve extends through a deep cut, and the vision of engines approaching from the east is obscured until within less than 1,000 feet of the point of collision. The track is on a grade of 1½ descending for westbound trains from a point about two miles east of Goose Lake.

When train No. 141 reached Bryant the signal of the telegraph office indicated that train No. 144 was in the block between Bryant and Charlotte, the first station west of Goose Lake. Rule 309b of the Chicago & North Western Railway provides as follows:

"When a train enters a block by clear signal indication and finds it closed as intended for a superior train, the superior train in either direction must receive a caution card, part A, authorized by train dispatcher, or if a passenger train is involved a caution train order."

Caution card, part A, reads as follows:

"Block is not clear. You may proceed at _____ with caution, prepared to stop within your vision."

The caution train order referred to in rule 309b provides as follows:

"You may proceed from _____ to _____ prepared to stop within your vision, account _____."

The operator at Bryant, knowing that train No. 144 was in the block, should have issued to train No. 141 either a caution card, part A, or caution train order. Instead of doing this, however, he issued a caution card, part B, reading as follows:

"Signal is displayed for 141 and 144 to meet at Goose Lake, Ia. Except as above block is clear."

After the accident Operator Book stated that he did not understand the rules before the accident occurred and therefore delivered a caution card, Part B, in error. As a result of this error, Engineer Hunk ran his train into Goose Lake, expecting train No. 144 to be west of the house-track switch where it was customary for the passenger train to back in on the side track.

Conductor Roberts of train No. 144 stated that his train was not protected by flag while occupying the main line at Goose Lake. Later he told brakeman Mohanrahi that the latter had better go forward

around the curve, as train No. 141 would be due in 5 minutes. At the same time he heard train No. 141 whistle and in a few seconds it appeared around the curve, running at a good rate of speed. He expected train No. 141 to come into Goose Lake slowly, as he thought it would be running on a part A caution card, and also as the engineman was familiar with the conditions under which train No. 144 worked at Goose Lake, and consequently would run his train cautiously. Conductor Roberts had not given his flagman previous instructions to protect the train because he thought they had plenty of time to finish their work and get back on the siding before train No. 141 would arrive.

Dead Brakeman Mahannah stated that while doing the necessary switching work as was instructed by the conductor to flag the passenger train as soon as he uncoupled the cars. He had just started to uncouple the cars when the collision occurred.

Fireman Fagan, who was on the lead engine of train No. 144, stated that he asked engineman Lillis what time it was, and on being told said it was about time some one was flagging train No. 141. He then picked up a lantern and was going out to flag when he saw the headlight of train No. 141 about 15 car lengths away. His engineman sounded the whistle signal for brakes and then they both jumped. The force of the collision pushed his engine back about two car lengths. Train No. 144 had worked at Goose Lake under similar conditions on previous occasions without being protected by flag. This last statement was corroborated by Brakeman Klima.

Fireman Schoenfelt of train No. 141 stated that Engineman Hunt received a caution card, part B, at Bryant on the day of the collision and expected to find train No. 141 west of the west switch at Goose Lake. They had found that train at work east of the east switch on previous occasions, but it had been protected by flag. When he first saw train No. 144 Fireman Schoenfelt thought it was on the side track; then he saw that it was on the main track and called to Engineman Hunt to stop his engine. Engineman Hunt applied the brakes in emergency, reversed the engine, and then they both jumped. Engineman Hunt was dead when picked up after the collision. Fireman Schoenfelt thought that train No. 141 was running about 30 miles per hour when going around the curve leading to Goose Lake. He also stated that according to the rules the crew of his train should have received a caution train order at Bryant, but it was the general custom to receive a caution card, part B. He had often asked the engineman why he accepted such a card, and the reply was "That is all they will give us"

The records of the employees involved in this accident were good, and none had been on duty in violation of the course of service law.

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This accident was caused by train No. 144 occupying the main track on the time of a superior train, in violation of rule No. 89, which provides that at meeting points between trains of different classes the inferior train must take the siding and clear the superior train by at least 5 minutes.

The crew of train No. 144 is also at fault for failing properly to protect their train by flag. It appears that this train has often been handled at Goose Lake under the same conditions as obtained on the day of the accident, sometimes with flag protection and sometimes without it.

Operator Beck is also to blame for his failure to obey the rules of the company which required him to issue to the crew of train No. 144 a caution train order, or a caution card, form A. From his statement, however, it appears that he was not familiar with the rules of the company governing a situation of this character.

That such loose methods of train operation should have been allowed to grow up and exist until attention was focused upon them by a disastrous collision indicates a decided neglect of duty on the part of the employees, and a lack of supervision on the part of the officials whose duty it was to see that the rules of the company affecting the safety of its employees and the traveling public were enforced and obeyed.