

CIRCULATED _____

IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON THE
GRAND RAPIDS & INDIANA RAILROAD, NEAR CADILLAC,
MICH., FEBRUARY 26, 1919.

April 3, 1919.

On February 26, 1919, there was a head-on collision between a passenger train and a freight train about two miles south of Cadillac, Mich., on the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad, which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of three employees and twenty passengers. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety submits the following report.

This accident occurred on the Northern Division, which is a single track line extending between Comstock Park, Mich., (5.3 miles north of Grand Rapids) and Hickman City, Mich., a distance of 220.4 miles. Train movements are governed by time table and train orders. There is a manual block system in operation which affords protection to following movements only.

Approaching the point of accident from the north the track is tangent for a distance of about 8000 feet. This tangent is on a fluctuating grade, the last 1700 feet being on an ascending grade, having a maximum ascent of 1.52 per cent. There is then a curve to the left of 2 degrees 55 minutes, 67 feet in length, on an ascending grade of 1.11 per cent, near the southern end of which the accident occurred. Approaching the point of accident from the south the track is tangent for 8000 feet, on an ascending grade which reaches a maximum of 1.34 per cent. Then comes a 4-degree curve to the left about 1500 feet in length on an ascending grade of 1.37 per cent, followed by

a tangent 800 feet in length on a practically level grade, which connects with the curve on which the accident occurred.

The trains involved were southbound freight train No. 52 and northbound passenger train No. 5. Train No. 52, en route from Cadillac, Mich., to Grand Rapids, Mich., consisted of 30 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 82, and was in charge of Conductor Barrett and Engineman Williams. It left Cadillac at 8.20 a.m. and had proceeded about two miles when it stalled. It was while the head end of the train was standing at this point that it was struck by train No. 5.

Northbound passenger train No. 5, en route from Grand Rapids to Mackinac City, Mich., consisted of one mail car, one chair car and three coaches, all of wooden construction, hauled by engine No. 2, and was in charge of Conductor Ennes and Engineman Scanlon. It passed Hobart, 5.7 miles south of Cadillac, at 10.41 a.m., and at about 10.50 a.m. ran into train No. 52.

The mail car was derailed and both engines were badly damaged. With the exception of the engines, very slight damage was sustained by any of the equipment. The employees killed were the engineman and fireman of the passenger train. The weather was cold and slightly hazy, but not sufficiently so to obscure signals.

Conductor Barrett of train No. 52 stated that his train stalled in the snow and they were unable to back out. They began taking slack, when a drawbar pulled out of the third car behind the engine. A switch engine which had been noting a

pusher then out off the cars and the caboose and took them back to the yard. In the meantime the conductor and Flagman Demarest were shoveling away the snow, when the latter saw train No. 5 approaching. As the conductor looked he noticed that the engine was working steam, and said, "My God, can't he see that engine? He must have gotten by our flag." He had a time table meeting point with train No. 5, but held no orders against it and was moving according to time card schedule. Conductor Barrett further stated that he saw his flagman, Maschinsky, start out with a flag, that he had time enough to go a sufficient distance to insure full protection, and that he thought there was nothing to obstruct the view of the flag by the engine crew of train No. 5 as the track ahead was straight for about half a mile and the sun was shining. He stated that in flagging a red flag and fuses are all that is generally required. In this case he doubted if the conditions required the use of torpedoes, but thought the use of a torpedo would have been proper and might have averted the accident. His reason was that an engineer's attention is sometimes diverted, and in such cases a torpedo would be more effective than a flag or fuses. He felt certain that his engine carried torpedoes, but had not checked up when leaving to see if this was so.

Engineman Williams, of train No. 50, stated that his train stalled in the snow at 7.48 a.m. and while waiting for the return of the switch engine the head brakeman went out to flag against train No. 5 and asked whether it would be all right to take along a torpedo. The engineer answered that it would,

but on making a search none were found. He admitted that he was responsible for seeing that his engine was properly equipped with flagging material, and before leaving had looked to see whether his engine was supplied with lantern, flags and fuses, but had paid no attention to torpedoes. He stated that while they were waiting for the switch engine to come back Fireman Dyer remarked that No. 5 could not be on time. Just then he looked around and saw that train rounding the curve. As the train approached he could hear the engine's working steam and the fog of escaping steam on the engine's as well as the fireman's side was such as he thought was sufficient to obscure the view. His fireman jumped off and ran toward the passenger train giving stop signals.

Fireman Dyer stated that when he first saw No. 5 rounding the curve he jumped out of the engine and flagged from the engine's side. The cab window was shut and the engine was working steam. He said that his engine never carried torpedoes though he was familiar with the rules concerning them and thought the flagman ought to have had them. He stated that he had acted as fireman with Engineer Seanlon of No. 52 and knew the latter to be cautious in observing signals. He thought the engineer could not have seen the flag and attributed the engineer's failure to see the flag to his running through a bank of snow which would obscure the view.

Head Brakeman Macdonkey stated that at about 10.35 a.m. he went out to flag against No. 5, taking with him a red flag and a red fuse, but no torpedoes, as there were none on

the engine. He went beyond the curve and first saw No. 5 when it was coming around the hill. A very light snow was falling and the sun was shining in streaks. The minute No. 5 came around the curve on to the straight track he began giving stop signals, continuing to do so until he was forced off the track. He lit a fusee and swung it several times, and threw it at the closed cab window as the engine passed him. On account of the heavy steam escaping from the engineman's side he could see only the side window. In addition, the wind carried the engine smoke along with it and he thought all this must have obscured the engineman's view. He heard the engineman blow his whistle coming toward Hobart. He asked that after No. 5 passed him he threw a fusee at it and made an effort to stop it from the rear. The point where he was standing when train No. 5 passed him was 1600 feet from train No. 53.

Flagman Demarest stated that after the collision occurred, he immediately started for the head end, where he saw Head Brakeman Maschinsky, who told him that he had come to stop No. 5 and where he had stood. Flagman Demarest saw footprints in the snow indicating that Maschinsky had been standing where he said he had, and he picked up a burned fusee, the end of which looked as if it had struck some object; also the end of a fusee near the place where the flagman had been standing. He stated that there was nothing to obstruct the view of a red flag at the time, but thought that a torpedo might have been used with advantage in stopping No. 5.

Conductor Eneas of northbound passenger train No. 5

stated that the first intimation he had of the accident was when it actually occurred. He did not see the flagman of freight train No. 53 at any time, and if a flag had been out he saw no reason why the engineer could not have seen it. The speed of his train at time of wreck was about 20 miles an hour. He added that the engineer whistled for the road crossin, beyond Hobart.

Brakeman Kotolun of passenger train No. 5 stated that he went back with the flagman of freight train No. 53 soon after the accident and the latter pointed out the spot where he stood when he flagged the passenger train, this being about half a mile from the point of collision. One of the passengers told the brakeman he heard the flagman shoutin, and the brakeman himself saw the remains of the fusee while the flagman apparently has burned.

Baggageman Hooker stated that they were running out of Hobart at a speed of from 20 to 35 miles an hour, when without any warning whatever, they struck the freight train. There was nothing to indicate that the train had been flagged. He noticed that the cab window of the engine was shut and stated that there was no application of the brakes.

This accident was caused by the failure of Engineer Seanlon of passenger train No. 5, properly to observe and obey stop signals given by the flagman of freight train No. 53. The evidence is that Flagman Maschinskey was 3600 feet away from his train when he flagged train No. 5, and had the signals given by him with flag and fusee been observed the accident could no doubt have been averted.

Under Rule No. 718 enginemen are required to see that their engines are equipped with the necessary signal equipment. Engineman Williams had not obeyed this rule and did not know that there were no torpedoes on the engine until they were needed when the brakeman went ahead to flag. Had this rule been complied with, and had Brakeman Maschinsky put down a torpedo when he saw no attention was being paid to his stop signals, it is possible the engine crew of train No. 5 would have been warned in time to enable them to stop their train and prevent the collision.

The engine crew of train No. 5 had been on duty less than five hours at the time of the accident.

H.F.