

January 13, 1912.

MEMORANDUM TO COMMISSIONER McCHORD

Relative to accident on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway,  
November 9, 1911.

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

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On November 9, 1911, the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway reported by telegraph a head-on collision occurring that morning near Dalton, Ga., between north-bound extra freight train No. 174 and south-bound freight train No. 19. Inspector Hays was in the vicinity at the time and made an investigation. A synopsis of his report is given below.

Extra No. 174, consisting of thirty-five cars and hauled by engine No. 174, left Atlanta, Ga., at 9:30 P. M., November 8, for Chattanooga, Tenn. At Kingston, Ga., a station 58.6 miles north of Atlanta, this train received an order to meet train No. 19 at Dalton, Ga., 40.4 miles beyond Kingston, after which it proceeded toward Dalton.

Train No. 19, consisting of twenty-one cars and hauled by engine No. 179, left Chattanooga, Tenn., at 4:55 A. M., November 9, for Atlanta, Ga., and reached Dalton at 7:05 A. M. After an additional car had been picked up at that point, train No. 19 started on its way to Atlanta at 7:20 A. M., having received no order relative to extra No. 174, and at 7:30 A. M., at a point nearly one mile south of Dalton, it collided with

extra No. 174, causing the death of the engineman of train No. 19.

This division of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway is a single track line, and in the vicinity of the point where this accident occurred runs parallel to the line of the Southern Railway. Owing to several curves the limit of vision in either direction is about 2,000 feet, and it is difficult to distinguish on which line of railroad an approaching train is running. No block signals are in operation. At the time of the accident the weather was foggy and cloudy.

Train order No. 518, which was received by extra No. 174 at Kingston, read as follows:

"Train Order No. 518, Atlanta, Ga.  
11-9-11.

To C. & E. No. 7 and No. 19.

Extra 174 North will hold main track and meet No. 7 engine 111, at Resaca, and take siding and meet No. 19, engine 179, at Dalton.

J.L.Mc."

Train No. 7, mentioned in the order, is a local freight train running from Dalton south-bound to Atlanta. This order was delivered to train No. 7 at Dalton, and was made complete at 4:35 A. M. Train Dispatcher Thompson insists that the order was addressed to train No. 19 at Dalton as well as to train No. 7. This order, however, was not delivered to train No. 19 on its arrival at Dalton. The operator at Dalton stated that he did not remember either copying the order or delivering a copy of it to train No. 7, although he admitted that the signature on it was his own. His carbon copy of the order has never been found. He also admitted that he knew the trains were to meet at Dalton, but thought that train No. 19 received the order to meet extra No. 174 at some point north of Dalton.

After train No. 19 had picked up the car at Dalton he expected it to wait for extra No. 174. When the train dispatcher asked him why train No. 19 did not sign up for this order, the train had gone. The operator at once went to the telegraph office of the Southern Railway in the same building, in the endeavor to have extra No. 174 flagged at a station on the Southern Railway south of Dalton.

Train order No. 518 was put out for trains Nos. 7 and 19 at Dalton at 3:55 A. M., November 9, one hour before train No. 19 left its terminal at Chattanooga and two hours and ten minutes before it arrived at Dalton. In doing this the train dispatcher violated rule No. 432 of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway book of rules, reading as follows:

"Orders should not be sent a long time before delivery, nor to points unnecessarily distant from where they are to be executed."

In putting out this order at Dalton for train No. 19 to meet extra No. 174 at that point, the dispatcher also failed to obey rule No. 434, reading as follows:

"As far as practicable, issue meeting and waiting orders for trains before they reach the station at which trains are to be met or waited for."

That this rule could have been complied with is evidenced by the fact that train No. 19 not only left Chattanooga, its terminal, without receiving order No. 518, but passed two open telegraph stations between Chattanooga and Dalton, at either of which it could have received this order. In addition to violating rules Nos. 432 and 434, the train dispatcher also violated that part of rule No. 208 reading as follows:

"The several addresses must be in the order of superiority of trains and when practicable must include the operator at the meeting or waiting point, each office taking its proper address."

If the dispatcher had sent a copy of the order to train No. 19 prior to the time it reached Dalton, at the same time sending a copy of the order to the operator at Dalton in accordance with rule No. 208, the accident would undoubtedly have been prevented.

Both the dispatcher and the operator involved are experienced men. All the employees concerned had had the required amount of rest before going on duty and none had been on duty in excess of the statutory period.

This accident was caused by the failure of Train Dispatcher Thompson and Operator Carter to properly perform their duties. Train Dispatcher Thompson failed to obey and be governed by rules Nos. 432 and 434 and issue train order No. 518 to train No. 19 prior to its arrival at Dalton. Operator Carter failed to copy for and deliver train order No. 518 to train No. 19.

As a preventive of accidents of this character, it is recommended that an adequate block signal system be installed. Had such a system been in use this accident would probably have been prevented, notwithstanding the negligent manner in which the train dispatcher and the operator performed their duties.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of  
Safety Appliances.