

File No. 56

March 5, 1912.

MEMORANDUM TO COMMISSIONER McCHORD:

Relative to accident on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad,  
January 2, 1912.

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

On January 2, 1912, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad reported  
by telegraph a head-on collision on its Salt Lake Division at  
Copper Plant Switch, about one and one-half miles north of Salt  
Lake City, Utah, at 9:45 p. m., January 1st, between freight train  
No. 52, east-bound from Ogden to Salt Lake City, Utah, and switch-  
ing engine No. 644, west-bound from Salt Lake City yards. In-  
spectors Winter and Weeks were assigned to make an investigation,  
and the following is a synopsis of their report:

Freight train No. 52, consisting of 6 empty baggage cars,  
one loaded box car and caboose, hauled by engine No. 952, in charge  
of Conductor Smith and Engineman Kesler, left Ogden for Salt Lake  
City at 7:45 p. m.

Switching engine No. 644, in charge of Night Yard Master  
Fitzpatrick and Engineman Clawson, left the yard at Salt Lake City  
between 9:30 and 9:15 p. m., by direction of the Night Chief Train  
Dispatcher, to assist a reported derailed engine. At 9:45 p. m.,  
about one and one-half miles west of Salt Lake City it collided  
head-on with freight train No. 52, resulting in the death of the  
fireman, one switchman, and the injury of four other employees on  
engine No. 644.

The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad is a single track line bet-  
ween Salt Lake City and Ogden, and is paralleled by the tracks of  
the Oregon Short Line Railroad for some distance beyond the yard  
limit board at Salt Lake City. There is no interlocking plant on  
the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad between Salt Lake City and Ogden;  
however, they have a switch connection with the Oregon Short Line  
at the Stock Yards, about one and one-half miles west of the yard  
limit board. The Oregon Short Line Railroad has an interlocking  
plant at Sixth North Street, Salt Lake City.

About 7:50 p. m., January 1st, San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt  
Lake Railroad engine No. 35 was derailed at the interlocking tower  
at Sixth North Street while going from the Oregon Short Line  
Round House to the passenger station at Salt Lake City to take out  
passenger train No. 65. The engineman finding that he could not  
derail his engine without help went to the interlocking tower and  
asked the Towerman to call the Dispatcher and tell him that help  
was needed. Being busy Towerman Kreyenbuhl asked Signal Repairman  
Smith to advise the Dispatcher of the accident.

Mr. Smith called No. 2447, the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad Dispatchers' office on the Bell telephone and was referred to the Information Operator as the number had been changed. The Information Operator, who was an extra operator on duty that night, gave Mr. Smith the new number, which he claims he wrote down on a slip of paper but afterwards lost, and from all information now obtainable it appears that Smith was given No. 4365, which is the Denver & Rio Grande Dispatchers' office. On calling this number and getting his connection Smith stated that he asked "Is this the Pedro Dispatcher? On being answered "yes" he stated that engine No. 55 was derailed at the interlocking plant, and No. 55 would be delayed. He was asked to give the nature of the derailment, which he did, and was advised all right.

Night Chief Dispatcher McLeese of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad states that about 9:05 p. m., some one called him on the telephone and stated that No. 55's engine was off the track at Sixth North Street at the interlocking plant. He replied that he had no train No. 55 out of Salt Lake City, and asked if it was extra 954, and the reply was "yes". He asked at what point the derailment occurred, and was advised at the Power House. He asked who was talking and the reply was the Fireman, and that the engine could not be moved until they had help. He informed the party he would send a switch engine to assist them. He then called up the yard office, which is located about 1,500 feet distant, to get the Yard Master and a switching engine and crew to go and assist the derailed engine. About 9:30 p. m., Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Night Yard Master, came to the yard office and asked Dispatcher McLeese for instructions. He was told that extra 954's engine was derailed at the interlocking plant near Sixth North Street. The Yard Master replied that there was no interlocking plant on their line at Sixth North Street, but that he would go out and see what the trouble was. McLeese told the Yard Master to wait until he had talked with the Trick Dispatcher about orders. After finding out from the Trick Dispatcher that Extra No. 954 west had right over train No. 52, and that train No. 52 in turn had right over 2d and 3d sections of train No. 5, Ogden to Salt Lake City, he told Fitzpatrick he would hold all trains here until he got back, thinking he could save the 20 or 25 minutes the crew would consume coming down to the Dispatchers' office for orders. Dispatcher McLeese heard nothing more until 10:20 p. m., when he was called on the telephone by Yard Master Fitzpatrick and advised of the collision.

The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad has no interlocking plant between Salt Lake City and Ogden; however, there is a power plant located near Sixteenth North Street, which probably accounts for Dispatcher McLeese understanding Smith to say "power plant" when in reality Smith said "tower plant". The San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad has a passenger train No. 65 due to leave Salt Lake City at 8 p. m. daily. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad has a freight train No. 65 due to leave Salt Lake City at 8:15 a. m. On this date Denver & Rio Grande freight train No. 65 left Salt Lake City at 12:25 p. m. some eight hours before the derailment was reported to Dispatcher McLeese, and this being so he should have known that No. 65 was not the train involved. Engine No. 954

with 12 loaded cars was running as an extra Salt Lake City to Ogden and left Salt Lake City at 7:30 p. m., and had no accident, and the assumption of Dispatcher McLesca that No. 954 was derailed when advised that train No. 52 would be delayed, when that train had departed some eight hours before, indicates that he acted in great haste and without ascertaining what train was derailed before directing switching engine No. 644 to go beyond the yard limits without train orders.

Night Yard Master Fitzpatrick states that while out in the yard, between 8:30 and 9 p. m., the yard clerk notified him that the Night Chief Dispatcher wanted him to take an engine and go to North Salt Lake yard, that an engine was off the track there, mentioning Sixth North Street interlocking switch as the place where the engine was derailed. Shortly after this he went into the yard office, called up Dispatcher McLesca, and asked him what was wanted. He stated that the Dispatcher said he had received a telephone message from the fireman of Extra No. 954 that the engine was off all but the tank about Sixth North Street near the interlocking switch. He told Dispatcher McLesca there was no interlocking switch on their line, and the Dispatcher replied that the engine was off elsewhere, and to get an engine and go out that way. Fitzpatrick told him all right. McLesca then said wait until I ask the Dispatcher about orders, and in a short while returned and told him that he was all right that Extra No. 954 hauling 51's train had right of track over No. 52. There were two sections of train No. 52 at the depot, and Fitzpatrick asked him about these trains. The Dispatcher replied that No. 52 had right of track over these trains, and to go ahead and he would protect him until he got back. As there is an interlocking switch on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Fitzpatrick states he thought they would go as far as the connection at the Stock Yards with the Short Line, unless they found the derailed engine before reaching that point. Fitzpatrick states they were at the Copper Plant switch when he noticed a headlight. As the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad parallels the tracks of the Oregon Short Line at the point of the accident, he thought the headlight might be on a Short Line train. He was leaning out of the cab window at the time, and on taking a second look turned around and said "look out for 52 and jump", at that time jumping off the engine.

Extra 954 with 12 loaded cars, in charge of Conductor Groom, left Salt Lake City at 7:30 p. m., and had orders to run extra Salt Lake City to Ogden with right over train No. 52. There is no open night telegraph office between Ogden and Salt Lake City. There is a day office at Kayville, a station 19 miles from Salt Lake City, and there is an arrangement at this point by which a bell rung from the Dispatchers' office at Salt Lake City calls the operator at night. When train No. 52 reached Kayville Conductor Smith could not find the operator and was unable to get more time against No. 954 west. Train No. 52 met Extra No. 954 at Kayville at 9:05 p. m., Extra No. 954 being forty-five minutes late on their order. This would have given Dispatcher McLesca about one hour from the time he was first notified of this derailment over the telephone to raise the telephone operator at Kayville in order to give an order

train No. 88 an order which would permit switching engine No. 844 to proceed beyond the yard limits. Dispatcher McLeese stated he attempted to get this Operator before instructing Yard Master Fitzpatrick to go out and assist the derailed engine, but the statement of Fitzpatrick contradicts this in a measure, as he said "he came presently, I held the phone while he was gone", which would indicate that Dispatcher McLeese used but little time in trying to get the Operator at Eaysville.

The yard limit board is about one-half mile beyond Sixth North Street, and if Dispatcher McLeese understood that switching engine No. 844 was only going to Sixth North Street, he knew they would not go beyond the yard limit board, and needed no orders. If he understood they would go to the Power House, which is outside the yard limits, he disregarded the rules of the company in directing them to go outside the yard limits without furnishing train orders as required by rules No.'s 103 and 201. These rules read as follows:

"Rule No. 103. All messages or instructions respecting the movement of trains or the condition of track and bridges must be in writing."

"Rule No. 201. For movements not provided for by the time table train orders will be issued by authority and over the signature of the Superintendent."

Night Yard Master Fitzpatrick and Engineman Clawson in addition to disregarding the e rules also violated rules No.'s 34, 32 and 99 by going beyond the yard limit board without orders or proper protection. These rules read as follows:

"Time Card Rule No. 34. Trains must obtain clearance cards before leaving their initial stations, also at Salt Lake City."

"Rule No. 32. A train must not leave its initial station or any district or junction, or pass from double to single track until it has been ascertained whether all trains due which are superior or of the same class have arrived or left."

"Rule No. 99. When a train is stopped by an accident, obstruction, or other cause, a flagman must immediately go back and stop signals to stop any train moving in the same direction. If the accident or obstruction occurs on a single track, and it becomes necessary to protect the front of the train, or if any other track is obstructed the same precaution must be taken."

This accident was caused by the failure of Train Dispatcher McLeese, Yard Master Fitzpatrick and Engineman Clawson to obey and be governed by the operating rules of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of  
Safety Appliances.