File No. 38

February 6, 1913.

MEMORANDUM TO COMMISSIONER McCHORD:

Relative to accident on the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad, January 15, 1913.

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

On January 15, 1913, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad reported by telegraph a head-on collision on the tracks of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad about one and one-third miles east of New Castle, Pa., at 6:30 a. m., between Baltimore & Ohio passenger train No. 156, and Pittsburg & Lake Erie shuttle train No. 501. Inspectors Craig and Gibbons were assigned to make an investigation, and the following is a synopsis of their report:

Baltimore & Ohio passenger train No. 156, eastbound, runs from New Castle to Allegheny, Pa., in charge of Conductor Ellis and Engineman Gannon, and consisted of one combination mail and baggage car and two coaches, hauled by engine No. 848. This train left Union Station, New Castle, Pa., at 6:22 a. m., two minutes late. About half a mile from this station the train headed into the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track through an open switch and continued eastward upon the west-bound main track of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad until it collided head-on with Pittsburg & Lake Erie shuttle train No. 501 on a 5 degree curve, about 3,400 feet from the point at which they entered upon the Pittsburg & Lake Erie west-bound main track. The estimated speed of this train at the time of the accident was 15 to 18 miles per hour.

Pittsburg & Lake Erie shuttle train No. 501, west-bound, runs from New Castle Junction to New Castle, Pa., in charge of Conductor J. D. Clark and Engineman H. M. Clark, and consisted of one combination baggage and smoking car and two coaches, hauled by engine No. 926S, and at the time of the collision was running at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour.

This collision resulted in the death of engineman, fireman and baggageman, and injury to conductor, brakeman and mail clerk on Baltimore & Ohio train No. 156, and the death of engineman and fireman, and injury of conductor, brakeman, baggageman and express messenger on Pittsburg & Lake Erie shuttle train No. 501; also the injury of four passengers.

The Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad operate double track from New Castle Junction to New Castle, Pa., a distance of 2.9 miles. These tracks run parallel to the tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and between the tracks of these railroads is a line of telegraph poles. About 3,500 feet East of Union Station, New Castle, Pa., near Furnace Street, the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad

crosses the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad at right angles. Near this crossing is a wye connection, about 400 feet long, leading from Pittsburg & Lake Erie west-bound main line to Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4, known as Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad operate its passenger trains a distance of about 3,250 feet over the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad from Union Station, New Castle, where they are diverted to their own main line, which is operated as a single track for a distance of about 2,800 feet to the place where their double track begins. This single track parallels the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track its full length, and then runs parallel to the Pittsburg & Lake Erie west-bound main line until the double track of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad begins.

Baltimore & Ohio trains are required to stop 2,850 feet east of Union Station for the purpose of allowing trainmen to throw the main track switch that diverts their trains to what is known as Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4, in order to get on the main line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. When they clear the Pennsylvania Railroad main track they come to a full stop, in order to allow the trainmen to close this switch, at which time the engine is standing about 135 feet east of the switch that leads to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad main track. Located sixty-five feet east of this switch is another switch which leads to Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track.

On the morning of the accident Baltimore & Ohio train No. 156 left New Castle Junction about 8.55 a. m., and backed up to the Union Station at New Castle, Pa., leaving the switch leading from Pennsylvania track No. 4 to Baltimore & Ohio main track open. At this time Pennsylvania Railroad switch engine No. 9208 was standing on the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track, and after train No. 156 had passed pulled out of the transfer track, closed the switch leading to Baltimore & Ohio main track, and left the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track switch open. When train No. 156 left Union Station about fifteen minutes later, it is assumed that the enginemen thought their main track switch was open, as they had left it in that position when they backed into Union Station.

These switches are handled by trainmen, and the switch stands are of the dwarf type. The switch light on the switch leading to the Baltimore & Ohio main line shows white when set for Baltimore & Ohio main track, and green when set for Pennsylvania track. The switch light on the switch leading to the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track shows green when set for Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track, and white when set for Pennsylvania track. When train No.156 left Union Station on the morning of the accident the switch leading to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was lined up for Pennsylvania track No. 4, and the switch leading to the Pittsburg

& Lake Erie transfer track was open, and both lights showed green. The engineman instead of stopping for the crew to open the switch leading to the Baltimore & Ohio main line ran past this switch, on through the open switch leading to Pittsburgh & Lake Erie transfer track, and continuing on this track ran through a locked switch out on to the west-bound main track of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad.

Train No. 156 proceeded east on the west-bound main track of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad to Gardner Avenue, a distance of about 2,200 feet, where they came to a full stop to receive and discharge passengers. When the stop was made at Gardner Avenue, although this train had run approximately one-half mile on the tracks of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad, neither the engineman nor any member of the train crew had discovered that they were on the Pittsburg & Lake Erie tracks, although they knew that the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was a single track line to Gardner Avenue. After leaving this point they proceeded east a distance of about 1,200 feet where the collision occurred.

Conductor Ellis on train No. 156 stated that he had been on this run since May 1911. On the morning of the accident the train had an unusually large amount of mail to load at Union Station. He looked after the loading of this mail, then walked down to the engine and said to the engineman "white block", the engineman answered "white block", after which the train left the station. He remained on the front end of the smoker until they opened and closed the switch leading to Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4, and then went into the train to collect tickets. He had not finished this work when the train left Gardner Avenue, and a few minutes after the collision occurred.

Brakeman Forker states that after leaving Union Station when the train stopped for the switch leading to Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4, he opened the switch and remained to close it after the train had cleared the Pennsylvania Railroad main track. He then gave a hand signal to proceed and got on the rear end of the train. He then passed through the train, and on arrival at Gardner Avenue got down on the east side of the train, as is customary, where some passengers got on. At Gardner Avenue, where this train stopped, are a number of parallel tracks belonging to the Baltimore and Ohio and Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroads, the station being located on the west side of these tracks. The Brakeman states that on arrival at Gardner Avenue they received and discharged passengers on this trip from the same side of the train that they ordinarily did, and that he did not notice at that time that they were on the tracks of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad. After their station work was done he gave the baggageman a hand signal to proceed, and the baggageman signaled the engineman by pulling the signal cord, this being the rule of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The train then proceeded to the point where the collision occurred.

Crossing Flagman Daly, who is located at Furnace Street crossing, at the east end of the transfer tracks, where this train came onto

the Pittsburg & Lake Erie track, stated that when Baltimore & Ohio train passed him he knew they were on the wrong track, but there was no way in which he could stop them, and when he saw they had run through the locked switch he knew that some mistake had been made.

Targetman Allison, who handles the signals governing the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad crossing with the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose location is about 100 feet from the switches that lead off of Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4, stated that the switch lights were all lighted and burning at the time train No. 156 passed them. When he saw this train go out over the tracks of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad he stepped out of his office and called to them as the last car passed, but was unable to attract the attention of any of the crew.

The two switches leading from Pennsylvania Railroad track No. 4 are what is known as neutral switches, and are left in the position last used by employees of either the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Pennsylvania Railroad, or Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad; all of them use these tracks. All trains are required to approach the switches under control, expecting to find them in either position, or to find other trains performing work in that territory.

This investigation developed that on several occasions during the past year this train, in charge of other employees, had run by the Baltimore & Ohio main line switch on Pennsylvania track No. 4, nearly fouling the Pittsburg & Lake Erie crossing, when they stopped and backed up, and that on one occasion, about six months ago, this train ran through the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track switch out upon the west-bound main track of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad, but stopped when the mistake was discovered. No report of these occurrences was made by the employees to the Superintendents of either road.

The main track switch light that leads to the Baltimore & Ohio main track shows white, and had Engineman Cannon properly observed these signal lights he would not have gone on the wrong track. Even after running through the switch at the Pittsburg & Lake Erie west-bound main track he should have known he was on the wrong track as the absence on his side of the train of the line of telegraph poles separating the tracks should have brought to his attention the fact that he was on the tracks of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad.

The switch that leads to the Baltimore & Ohio main line, and the switch that leads to the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track, divert trains to main lines, and to provide safety these switches should have a normal position and be locked in that position. This is evidently apparent from the investigation, which developed that thirty-three trains of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad alone daily use their main line switch. This arrangement would necessitate crews making these diverting movements bringing their trains

to a stop in order that the switches might be opened and closed when these movements are made. Proper regard for safety would also require that the east end of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track be equipped with a derailing device to prevent cars or engines fouling the west-bound main line of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad.

Engineman Cannon on train No. 156 was an extra passenger engineer, and had been on this run ten days prior to the accident. He had run other passenger trains between New Castle Junction and New Castle at different times, and was familiar with the tracks and switches involved. Conductor Ellis was a regular Conductor and had been in charge of this train since May 1911. Brakeman Forker had been brakeman on this train since December 1911.

The weather conditions at the time of the accident were cold, snowing a little and dark.

The accident was caused by the engineman of Baltimore & Ohio train No. 156 disregarding the switches and switch light indications, and running his train out upon the west-bound main track of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie Railroad.

Conductor Ellis and Brakeman Forker are equally responsible, for the reason that when they stopped at Gardner Avenue they should have discovered they were not on the tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and at this time could have prevented this accident by properly protecting their train.

As a prevention of accidents of this character it is recommended that all switches controlling main line movements should be securely locked or placed in charge of switch tenders. That in this instance a derailing device should be placed at the east end of the Pittsburg & Lake Erie transfer track. On account of the large number of trains using this crossing and these switches, to insure safety, this railroad crossing with the switches immediately adjacent thereto, should be controlled by an interlocker.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Inspector of
Safety Appliances.