

Grand Trunk Railway System



SAFETY BULLETIN 18

(Office of the Safety Engineer.)

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**A SHORT CATECHISM ON
PERSONAL INJURIES**

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A SHORT CATECHISM ON PERSONAL INJURIES

Q.—What kind of a safety record did Grand Trunk men make last year?

A.—There was a decrease of about 22 per cent. in the number of Grand Trunk employes killed and a decrease of about 8 per cent. in the number injured in 1917 compared with 1916.

Q.—Are most of the injuries received by employes of a serious or permanent nature?

A.—No. Only a small per cent. are serious or permanent and a large percentage are really trivial, but any case involving injury may become serious, especially cuts, open wounds and eye injuries where infection (blood poison) may develop. For this reason, every real injury should be given some attention and first aid obtained where available.

Q.—Why do we have to make reports of every little trivial injury?

A.—For two reasons. The injury itself may possibly develop more seriously than expected in which case there should be a record and we want to know how it happened regardless of how serious was the result.

Q.—Then when you say a certain number of employes were injured during a certain period there is no distinction between the case of a mashed finger and the loss of an arm?

A.—No. And really there is no distinction from a casualty prevention standpoint. What counts is the **cause, not the result**. It may, and often is, purely a matter of good fortune that a man receives only a mashed finger instead of loss of his limb or his life. For instance, a brakeman a few days ago went between two moving cars to stop leakage between air hose. He slipped and fell, but fortunately his body was thrown clear of rail and only the ends of his fingers were caught by wheels. Every time a preventable injury occurs, one thing is absolutely certain. **There is something wrong with Man, Methods or Material**; and the first thought in the mind of the foreman, trainmaster, yardmaster or other person in charge, after the injured has been cared for, is to find out what and where the wrong is and correct it. There is only one possible benefit to be derived from a preventable accident and that is greater knowledge or caution for use in preventing like occurrences.

Q.—Do you classify every case of injury sustained by an employe on this whole System according to the cause which produced it?

A.—We do and we study those causes.

Q.—What is the one most significant fact which a study of such causes year in and year out on the Grand Trunk and other roads has developed?

A.—It is this: Fully 80 per cent. of all injuries sustained by railroad men can be and should be prevented. That is to say, 4 out of every 5 injured or killed are injured or killed as the result of lack of reasonable care on the part of the man himself or some of his fellow employes.

Q.—What class of employes are getting hurt most frequently?

A.—Train, yard, engine and trackmen.

Q.—Does this mean that these branches of the service are naturally of an extra hazardous nature?

A.—No. It means nothing of the kind. As a matter of record, hundreds and thousands, in fact, a great majority of the total number engaged in train and track service, never get a scratch. But while this service is reasonably safe for the man who complies with the rules, it's mighty unsafe for the chance-

taker and rule violator. There are some men, you know, who would get hurt if they had a job as floor walkers in a department store and unfortunately it is impossible when hiring men for railroad service to open their "think tank" and find out just what kind of machine you are getting. But—and this is the important fact—every man can be a safe man if he wants to be. Whether he is impressed with the supreme importance of doing things the safe way when he first enters the service or not, he should soon become so when he sees or hears of a few examples of what carelessness cost. One trouble is that too many of us think it won't happen to us. The man who has gone between moving cars time and again, when he hears of some other fellow getting killed doing that stunt (and it's a stunt that kills a lot of them every year), should do some mighty serious thinking. He should end up by saying "I'm alive and that lad is dead not because I deserve to live, but solely because I was lucky. Doing work that way is a gambler's proposition, simply and solely. Guess I'll call it off right here and now." There's many a man in the cemetery or crippled for life who would be alive and able to-day if he had applied this little homely truth.

Q.—Do you find that most injuries are due to lack of safeguards on machinery or to machines, tools or equipment breaking or getting out of order?

A.—No. The facts show just the contrary. More than two-thirds of all preventable injuries are due to the "human element," that is, to a failure on the part of some one or more men to do the work in a safe way. While this Bulletin was being prepared, a communication was received from the Board of Railway Commissioners bearing on this very point. The Board calls attention to a few specific causes of injuries and death to employees as follows:

	1916 and 1917	
	K.	I.
Jumping off train in motion	6	42
Attempting to board train	4	40
Adjusting couplers, coupling or uncoupling	10	92
Crawling under cars	—	2
Crawling through cars over couplers	1	7
Caught while passing through cars between couplers	3	4
Riding on pilot of engine	3	5
	27	192

The Board characterizes these cases as preventable and desires that they be brought to the attention of all employees with a view of preventing like occurrences.

Q.—What are the chief causes of injuries and deaths to train, yard, engine and trackmen?

A.—There are two. Being struck by cars or engines and falling from cars or engines. It's the same on the Grand Trunk and every other road. If we could remove these two causes from our casualty lists, the statistical report of the Board of Railway Commissioners and of the Interstate Commerce Commission, so far as they would apply to these employees, would contain no more figures than a railroadman's income tax schedule.

Q.—Is it possible to remove these two chief causes and others of like nature?

A.—Yes, mostly. But it cannot be done by making more rules, adding more safety appliances or changing existing methods of operation. It's purely and simply a man proposition. Nothing else.

Q.—Why do you say that? You've got to show me.

A.—Well, facts are facts. There were 14 Grand Trunk men killed last year by being struck by trains, cars or engines. Nine of these were struck in broad daylight and clear weather, with nothing whatever to prevent their seeing the engine or car, if they had looked. Three cases occurred during darkness, but with clear weather and only two when it was both dark and stormy or raining. In only one case were other cars or engines operating nearby at the time. One of these men was a fireman who had gotten off his engine and after going a considerable distance turned and stepped directly in front of a passenger train. It was daylight and clear and he had been twice warned to look out for that particular train. Another was a fireman going from roundhouse to office when it was dark and very stormy and was struck by engine backing up. One was a yard foreman struck by his own engine in clear daylight. One was a train baggageman who stepped upon track in front of engine. One was a shopman taking short cut across yard instead of going a few steps out of his way to reach regular pathway. One was a crossing watchman walking along tracks on his way home instead of using the street. In another case a yardman attempted to cross directly in front of an approaching car when it was raining and he slipped on wet rail, fell and was run over. One was a bridge watchman struck by engine on bridge. Four were trackmen at work on tracks and two were brakemen sent out to flag who sat down on track and went to sleep. Both these men had had ample rest before being called out and had been on duty but a short while.

Another thing that does not look right about this business. In six of the fourteen cases, no one on the engine or car saw the man before he was struck or knew that he had been struck, although four of these cases occurred in daylight and only two in stormy or rainy weather. When men are working on track, especially during unfavorable weather conditions, there is a duty on the part of engineers, firemen and men riding cars to look out for them and give ample warning.

An engineer and fireman were killed in collision due to their running by meeting point in violation of train order and another engineer and fireman were killed in collision due to short flagging. A yard helper, who had been repeatedly warned against the practice, stood between rails and attempted to get upon footboard of engine as it approached. He fell, was run over and killed. Five yard foremen and helpers were killed while making coupling between bad order cars, because they failed to notify another crew switching on same track of their position with result that other crew shoved cars against the string they were working between. One car repairer met his death through failure to use signal provided for his protection.

Of the entire number killed only 6, or about 11 per cent., were killed as a result of any defect in track, structures, tools or appliances. Four of these six were cases of derailments and two cases of scaffolds breaking or giving way. All other cases of employes killed, or 89 per cent. of the total, were either purely accidental or the result of rule violation or failure to use due care. By most charitable construction not over 12 of these fatal cases can be termed accidental. This leaves 67 per cent. of all deaths to Grand Trunk men last year due to unsafe methods of work on the part of those killed or fellow employes.

Q.—Who are the ones that suffer most from these unnecessary injuries and deaths and who should be most interested in preventing them?

A.—Employes and their families.