

Anchorage - February 11, 1946

571
2/11/46

W. G. W. BIRDSONG:

Please note the attached copy of a letter to Colonel Vancel R. Beck covering damage to Engine 556 at Clear.

As this is the responsibility of the Army, please make up a bill against the Army covering the charges for the repairs to Engine 556.

J. T. Cunningham
Acting General Manager

W:mf

27
Anchorage, Alaska
February 13, 1948

File: 581

Mr. J. T. Cunningham:

Reference AX-468 covering accident 12:45 P. M. February 8th at Clear, Train No. 26, Engine 556, Conductor Hannon, Engineer McCarty, striking an Army vehicle which was left by Army personnel in such a position as not to provide proper clearance for train.

Investigation developed that Engineer McCarty approached this location at about 22 miles per hour, flanging snow, which caused poor visibility, noticed Army Weasel 40197885 near track, however it appeared to him that it would clear his train. A large crane between him and the Weasel somewhat additionally impaired visibility.

When approximately 12 to 15 carlengths from the vehicle he became doubtful of its clearance and immediately placed train air in emergency, passing the vehicle $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 carlengths.

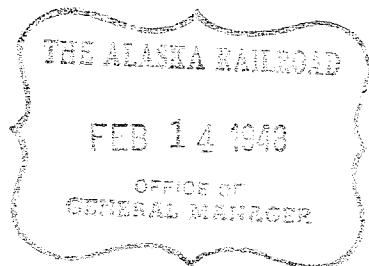
The plow of the locomotive struck one corner of the Weasel causing it to turn around and catch under the right main rod and right eccentric strap, bending both, thus disabling right side of engine.

Train delayed 6 hours obtaining necessary tools from Army Base and Section House at Clear and dismantling damaged parts of locomotive.

Conductor Hannon advised Sgt. Gosnell of Weather Squadron, Ladd Field, who was on detached service at Clear Army Camp, attempted to move Weasel after refueling vehicle near The Alaska Railroad main track and the Weasel became mired to the extent the Sergeant was unable to move it. Instead of affording flagging protection for the Weasel the Sergeant left the vehicle and walked to camp, apparently to obtain assistance, and while he was attempting to obtain assistance Train No. 26 struck the vehicle.

No disciplinary action is planned for the crew involved due to circumstances which impaired visibility. In my opinion, no gross negligence or carelessness was involved at time of accident.

M. M. Shappell
M. M. Shappell
Supt. of Operations



February 10, 1943

Lt. Col. Wensel S. Beck
Transportation Officer, Headquarters
United States Army, Alaska

My dear Col. Beck:

On February 8, 1943, at 12:45 p. m., Train #26, handled by Engine 556 struck an Army weasel #40197885 at Milepost 393 in the vicinity of Clear.

This weasel was operated by Sgt. Gussell of Weather Squadron, Ladd Field, who was on detached service in the Clear Army Camp. Information furnished this office indicates he attempted to turn the weasel and head back to camp after refueling the vehicle near the Railroad main track. The vehicle stalled close to the main track. He left the weasel in this position and walked to Camp and in the meantime Train #26, Engine 556, travelling north passed this point sideswiping the weasel, which resulted in the bent main rod on the right side of Engine 556. The Engineer on this train made an emergency application as soon as he saw this vehicle did not clear the main track. His visibility was poor due to flanging drifted snow and also the weasel was sitting in the shadow of a crane near the main track. The train was brought to a stop and ran only three car lengths by the vehicle. There was no Army personnel near or around at the time of the accident.

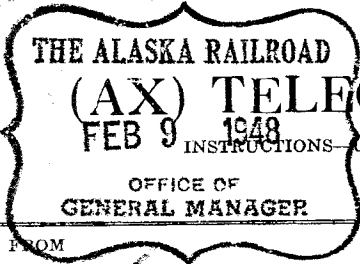
This accident was due solely to the fact that Army personnel left the vehicle too close to the track fouling the main line and did not provide any protection whatsoever with respect to train movements.

Very truly yours,

J. T. Cunningham
Asst. General Manager

JTC:mjp

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
THE ALASKA RAILROAD



INSTRUCTIONS - Use Signal "AX" to indicate to Receiving Operator to copy on this blank. The Signal gives precedence over other telegrams.
Operators in transmitting will send NUMBERS and ANSWERS only.
Answer all questions in blank.

FROM Fairbanks TIME M DATE February 8, 19 48

TO Fairbanks - Fair - Fair - Fair - Fair - Fair

1. (a) Date February 8, 1948 (b) Time 12:45 P.M. (c) Weather Conditions Clear Cold

2. (a) Nearest Station Clear (b) Nearest Milepost 393 (c) Estimated distance and direction from Milepost named Fairbanks

3. (a) Train 26 (b) Engine 556 (c) Conductor Hamon (d) Engineer Moriarty

4. (a) Kind of Train Freight (b) Direction of Train North (c) Speed of Train 22 MPH

5. Cars in Train (a) Loaded 12 (b) Empty - (c) Percentage of air brakes operating 100 (d) Gross Weight of Train in Tons 235

6. Nature of Accident A weasel vehicle side swiped 556

7. Cause Carelessness by Army soldier who left weasel fouling mainline

8. Any persons injured? Extent of injuries; name and residence; address of relations or friends:

NONE

9. What has been done for and disposition made of injured persons:

NONE

10. Is main line obstructed? No 11. Is there a siding by which trains can pass around wreck? No

12. Is assistance needed north or south end of train? No 13. Will temporary track have to be constructed? No

14. What kind and quantity of track, car, bridge, or other material is wanted?
Eng. 556 will have to have right main rod replaced.

15. Damage to track None

16. Damage to engine Main rod bent on right sides

17. If cars off track, give initials, numbers, and destination. Give estimated damage to each car and contents, and state which, if any, will have to be transferred. (If any cars empty, so designate).

None

18. Is engine off track? None

19. How long to clear main track? 6'

20. Help required? Train Crews

21. Curve or straight track? Straight

22. Detention to trains. None except No. 26

23. Remarks: Eng. Moriarty derailed train as soon as he saw Army weasel #017845 did not clear main track. Vis. was poor due to blinding drifted snow & also the weasel was sitting in the shadow of a large crane near main track. The Eng. came to a stop 3 car lengths by weasel causing but little body damage to weasel where it had struck and bowed main rod on eng. 556. No Army personnel were near or around at the time of accident. Characteristics of accident: The 312.5, apparently Sgt. Gussell of weather squadron, Ladd Field, who is on detached service at Clear Army Camp attempted to turn weasel and head back to camp after refueling vehicle near A & main line. The Sgt. remarked that the weasel stalled close to main tracks he left this vehicle, walked to camp in the morning.

No. 26 Eng. 556 struck weasel causing damage mentioned. (Signature) Hamon