

INCLINE RAILWAY ACCIDENT - 88

April 7th, 1939

Mr. H. H. Sharp, Vice President,
Howe Sound Company,
NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Sharp:

As wired you last evening, what might have been a very serious accident occurred on the Incline at noon yesterday. In the morning the so called Big Mule or 40 ton locomotive was handled down the Incline from the 2700 Haulage to be used in the 4100 Haulage System. This made an unbalanced number of skips or flat cars at the top of the Incline, so that two were to be lowered at one time on the regular cable. This had been done successfully on other occasions. This lowering operation was supervised by the man in charge of the Tunnel Railroad, but some signal must have been misunderstood, for the 15 ton G.E. locomotive handling the two empty flat cars moved too close to the head of the Incline before the Incline cable was attached. This first car over the crest gave a pull, which dragged the other flat car and motor with it.

When the motorman realized that he could do nothing further, he jumped out, but those three pieces gained a terrific speed on the incline and, after leaving the rail opposite the portal of the 4100, with one bounce they hit the end of the conveyor extension of the mill. The cars and motor were complete wrecks, the structural steel of that portion of the mill was quite badly damaged, the high tension cable to the main sub station was pulled out at the pot head in the Power House, and the water lines to the mill were also damaged.

Miraculously there was only one casualty, this being a Japanese who was replacing rollers on the Incline, and who was at the time in the lower Incline out. Some piece of equipment or piece of tie gave him a badly bruised leg and a minor head injury. At first it was thought he had a fractured leg, but this was not confirmed by X Ray. He is doing well and we expect no complications to set in.

There were several others on the Incline at the time, walking to the Beach, among them the school children, who had just been released for Easter vacation and, during the morning, there had been a number of men working on repair in the end of the conveyor building which was hit. These men were at lunch when the accident occurred; it was one of those split second accidents that might have been very serious.

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Refer:

OUR FILE NO.87

April 8th, 1939

Mr. Wm. Rae,
Provincial Inspector of Railways,
407 Bank of Nova Scotia Building,
VANCOUVER, B.C.

Dear Mr. Rae:

This will confirm my telephonic report to you of the 6th describing an accident occurring on our Tunnel Railway at the head of the Incline.

On the morning of the same day the large General Electric Locomotive, weighing some 35 to 40 tons, was lowered in two trips on our Incline cable from the 2700 Level to the 4100 Haulage Tunnel, where this piece of equipment is now to be used. In making these trips no flat cars were taken down the Incline, so that, when the transfer was completed, there was an unbalanced number of flat cars at the head of the Incline. This has occurred before, but infrequently, and entails lowering two empty flat cars in one trip on the Incline cable.

At 12:30 noon on the 6th, under supervision of the man in charge of the Tunnel Railroad, a regular motorman operating a 15 ton G.E. locomotive, pushed two regular empty flat cars to the head of the Incline rail, where the incline cable was to be attached. It is apparent that some signal was misunderstood and the first flat car to reach the crest was moved too far, so that it developed a pull down the incline, which could not be stopped by the motorman. The three pieces gained momentum and the motorman left his cab when he realized he could do nothing more. They quickly gained speed on the incline, arriving at the bottom within a few seconds, and with one bounce, hit the end of the mill conveyor housing, which is built of structural steel. The cars and locomotive were complete wrecks, but fortunately no one was in line with this fast moving equipment which the exception of one Japanese working who was replacing rollers on the Incline. At the time of accident he was in the lower incline cut. Some small piece of equipment or a part of a tie gave this man a badly bruised leg and a minor head injury. At first it was thought he had sustained a fractured leg, but this was not confirmed by X Ray.

As expressed by telephone, you will wish to visit the scene of the accident and we shall be glad to assist you at that time in obtaining all information we can as to the apparent cause of same and permanent method of preventing a recurrence.

Yours very truly

(signed CPB (C P Browning))

CPB:GRH

General Manager

BRITANNIA MINING AND SMELTING CO. LIMITED

BRITANNIA BEACH. B. C.

NEW YORK OFFICE
730 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK 19, N.Y. April 11, 1939.

INCLINE RAILWAY ACCIDENT - 88

Mr. C.P. Browning, General Manager,
Britannia Mining & Smelting Co. Limited
Britannia Beach, B.C.

Dear Mr. Browning:

Our office was closed on Friday and Saturday of last week, and we therefore did not receive the information in regard to the accident on the incline railway until yesterday, at which time we also received your letter of April 7th giving us the details of what took place. My most positive reaction to this accident is one of thankfulness that no one was seriously hurt.

As you know, we have often visualized what might happen if some cars got loose and went down the slope, and we now have quite a definitive demonstration of what the effect would be. Then too, in the elements making up this happening, it seems very obvious that the most important one was definite carelessness on the part of some one.

You will, of course, investigate this whole affair very carefully, and take steps to eliminate the possibility of a repetition. I realize of course, the difficulty in always controlling the human element which so greatly contributes to most serious catastrophes, and further, that the constant presence of a certain type of danger so inures men to its existence that they may eventually come to overlook it entirely. We shall await with much interest a report of the results of your investigation.

Sincerely yours,

(signed H H Sharp)

HHS:AD

BRITANNIA MINING AND SMELTING CO. LIMITED

BRITANNIA BEACH. B. C.

INCLINE RAILROAD ACCIDENT - 87

April 20th, 1939.

Mr C. V. Brennan, Asst. General Manager,
Britannia Mining and Smelting Co., Limited,
BRITANNIA BEACH, B. C.

Dear Mr. Brennan:

Herewith is a report of the accident on the Incline Railroad, April 6th, 1939, in which S. Okada, Japanese labourer, was injured and considerable property damage was done.

Introduction:

On April 5th instructions were given Mr. H. E. Parsons, Surface Foreman, to transfer the 40 Ton Locomotive known as the Mule, from the 2700 Level to the Beach on the 6th.

Description of Operation

Work went forward at 7 A.M. on the 6th, with Mr. Parsons personally in charge of the work. The crew Mr. Parsons selected for the work was the regular day shift skip crew, namely A. Gibson (Hoistman) and A. Hogg (Motorman) and the Japanese crew.

The locomotive was disconnected by the electricians into two unit. Each unit was lowered to the Beach separately. Before lowering the locomotive the idlers were removed from the Incline by the Japanese crew and were replaced after the second unit was lowered. This operation was completed without any hitch.

Returning Flat Car to Beach

Due to the fact that the locomotive was lowered in two separate units, two extra flat cars were hoisted to the top of the incline. In order to balance the distribution of flat cars between the Beach and Mine railways, Mr. Parsons decided to send one of the extra flat cars back to the Beach before the next regular passenger run at 1:30 P.M.

Method of Returning Flat Car and Consequences

The flat cars were fastened together with special chains made for this purpose of lowering two flat cars at one time. A long drawbar was used between the locomotive (15 ton) and the first or upper flat car. The second, or lower flat car was lowered slowly over the knuckle at the head of the Incline

Mr. C. V. Brennan:

April 20th, 1939:

and the first flat car was being brought into position for the attaching of the hoist cable. When the car was in position the motor could not hold the load, due to insufficient traction. The motorman reversed his motor, but could not gain traction. When he felt the train gaining momentum, he jumped from the cab and the whole train ran away down the Incline. The time was approximately 12:26 P.M.

Personal Injuries

S. Okada, who was working in the McRae Cut replacing idlers, was struck on the forehead and leg, presumably by flying pieces of a broken idler. Okada was either behind on of the high tension power line poles or trying to get behind when struck. First aid was rendered by a crew from the 2700 Shop and he was taken to the Beach and later to Vancouver.

Property Damage

2 Flat cars demolished (probably some salvage)
1 - 15 Ton G.E. Motor (some salvage)
85% of the idlers on Incline broken and 75% of bearing castings
Track on Incline out of alignment in several places
and lower end of track, about 40', destroyed
Numerous ties damaged
Bonding on Incline rails damaged
Water lines and some high tension lines cut between
Beach Power House and Mill
Trolley line broken at lower end of Incline
End of Mill Conveyor No. 4 - damaged
Steel work of conveyor wing of mill building badly
twisted. This will have to be replaced

Investigation of Accident

- (A) Condition of rails at head of Incline the rails at the head of the Incline where the locomotive should have stopped, were slippery and traction was poor.
- (B) Condition of locomotive: brakes in good working order
- (C) Method employed in doing similar work at previous times: (1) Two locomotives used; (2) Two locomotives and one or two ore cars behind second motor; (3) 15 ton locomotive with extra flat car; (4) One locomotive on main line connected to 15 ton by cable.

Mr. C. V. Brennan:

April 20th, 1939:

Mr. Rae, Inspector of Railways, recommends the installation of a safety switch with snubber line at the head of the incline. Briefly this is a turnout on a slight down grade, at the top of the Incline. The flat car or cars are parked on this turnout and the hoist cable attached. The car is then pulled off the turnout by the hoist and the switch opened and the car lowered down the Incline. When the car is coming up, it is pulled through the switch and backed down on the turnout before the cable is unfastened.

This recommendation is now being investigated.

Respectfully submitted,

(signed G Lipsey)

GCL:GRH

Mine Superintendent.