

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2768
THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR PEREA, N. MEX., ON
JANUARY 24, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad: Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe
Date: January 24, 1944
Location: Perea, N. Mex.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Extra 3887 West : Extra 3724 West
Engine numbers: 3887 : 3724
Consist: 68 cars, caboose : 40 cars, 2 cabooses
Estimated speed: Standing : 40 m. p. h.
Operation: Automatic block-signal system
Track: Double; tangent; 0.43 percent
descending grade westward
Weather: Snowing
Time: 5:14 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 4 injured
Cause: Failure properly to control speed
of following train in accordance
with signal indications

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2768

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS
UNDER THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910.

THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

February 24, 1944.

Accident near Perea, N. Mex., on January 24, 1944, caused
by failure properly to control the speed of the
following train in accordance with signal indications.

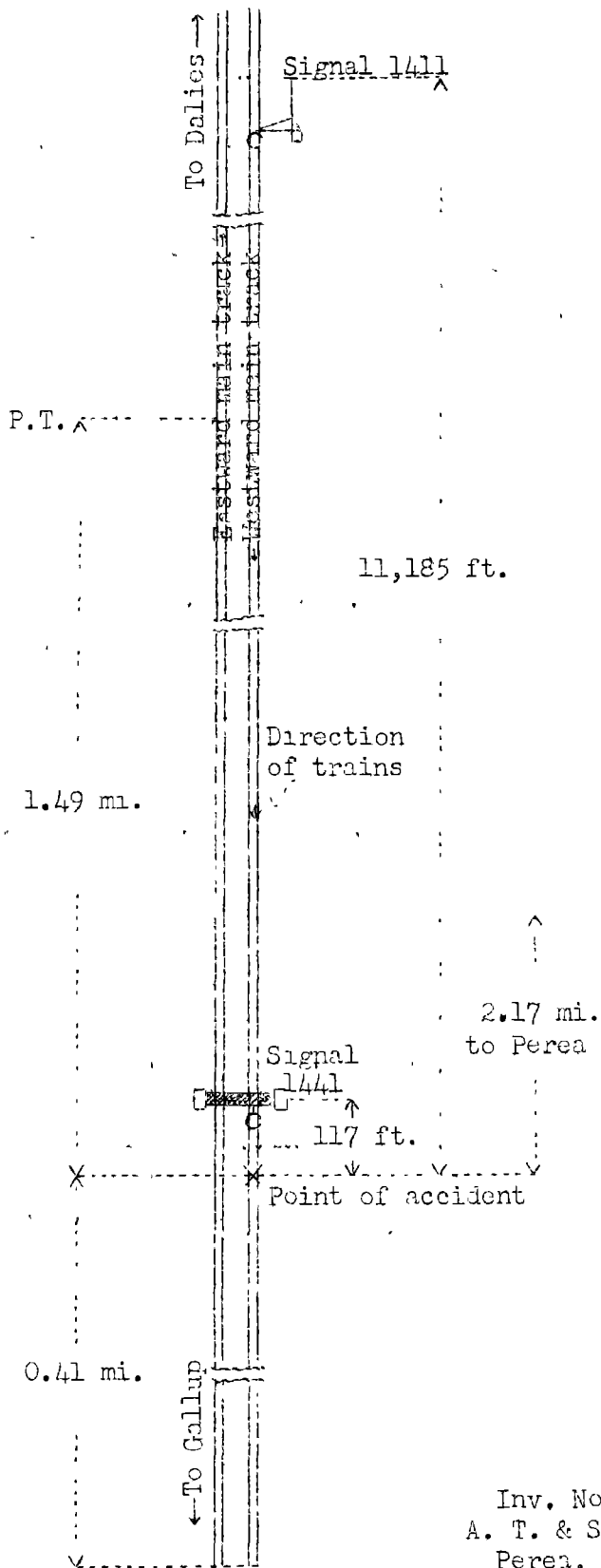
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On January 24, 1944, there was a rear-end collision
between two freight trains on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa
Fe Railway near Perea, N. Mex., which resulted in the death
of one employee and the injury of four employees.

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Com-
merce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the
Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and dis-
position.

o	Dalies, N. Mex.	98.20 mi.
o	Thoreau	16.30 mi.
o	Perea	2.17 mi.
X	Point of accident	13.53 mi.
o	Gallup, N. Mex.	



Inv. No. 2768
A. T. & S. F. Ry.
Perea, N. Mex.
January 24, 1944

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Albuquerque Division extending between Dalies and Gallup, N. Mex., 130.2 miles. This was a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by an automatic block-signal system, the indications of which superseded timetable superiority. The current of traffic was to the left. The accident occurred on the westward main track 2.17 miles west of Perea. The main tracks were tangent throughout a distance of 1.49 miles east of this point and 0.41 mile westward. The grade varied between 0.43 and 0.60 percent descending westward, and was 0.43 percent descending at the point of accident.

Automatic signals 1411 and 1441, which governed west-bound movements on the westward main track, were, respectively, 11,185 feet and 117 feet east of the point of accident. These signals were of the three-indication, color-light type, and were continuously lighted. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names of these signals were as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
1411	Yellow	Proceed at restricted speed.	Restricted Speed Signal.
1441	Red	Stop - Then proceed in accordance with Rule 830.	Stop and Proceed Signal.

DEFINITIONS.

* * *

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and wait until it has burned out, before proceeding.

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS.

Note.--The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds; and "_____" for extra long sounds. * * *

SOUND.

INDICATION.

* * *

(c) _ c o o

Flagman protect rear of train.

* * *

(e) _ _ _ _ _

* * *

Flagman may return from east or north, * * *

* * *

36. All members of train and engine crews must, when practicable, communicate to each other by its name the indication of all signals affecting the movement of their train.

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes and, when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fuses.

When signal * * * 14(e) * * * has been given to flagman and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

When the conditions require, he will leave the torpedoes and a lighted fusee.

* * *

830. When a train is stopped by a stop and proceed signal it may:

* * *

(b) On two or more tracks proceed at once at restricted speed.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Extra 3887 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 3887, 68 cars and a caboose, departed from Thoreau, 16.3 miles east of Perea and the last open office, at 4:30 p. m., passed Perea and stopped about 5:10 p. m. with the caboose standing 117 feet west of signal 1441. About 4 minutes

later the rear end was struck by Extra 3724 West.

Extra 3724 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 3724, 40 cars and two cabooses, passed Thoreau at 4:44 p. m., passed signal 1411, which displayed proceed-at-restricted-speed, passed signal 1441, which displayed stop-and-proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Extra 3887.

The caboose and the rear seven cars of Extra 3887, and the engine and the first four cars of Extra 3724 were derailed and damaged. Engine 3724 stopped on its right side, across the eastward main track and at an angle of about 45 degrees to it, with the front end about 280 feet west of the point of collision.

It was snowing at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:14 p. m.

The front brakeman of Extra 3724 was killed. The engineer, the fireman, the conductor and the flagman of Extra 3724 were injured.

Discussion

Under the rules of this carrier governing operation in automatic block-signal territory, a proceed-at-restricted-speed indication requires that the speed of a train must be reduced immediately, and the train must proceed at restricted speed. A stop-and-proceed indication requires a train to stop at the signal, then it may proceed but must be prepared to stop short of a train, an obstruction or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

As Extra 3887 West was approaching the point where the accident occurred a pipe of the air-brake system of the engine broke, and the brakes became applied. The train stopped at 5:10 p. m., with the caboose standing 117 feet west of signal 1441. About 4 minutes later the rear end was struck by Extra 3724 West.

When the brakes of Extra 3887 became applied the engineer sounded the engine-whistle signal for the flagman to furnish flag protection. During the time speed was being reduced, the flagman dropped three lighted 5-minute fuses at intervals on the westward track. When his train stopped he immediately proceeded eastward, and had reached a point about 1,500 feet distant when the engine-whistle signal recalling him was sounded. He placed torpedoes on the rail and a lighted fuse on the westward track, then proceeded toward the caboose. When he reached a point about 250 feet east of the caboose he heard the torpedoes explode. He immediately lighted a fuse and ran

toward the approaching train and was giving stop signals when the engine passed him.

As Extra 3724 was approaching signal 1411, located 11,068 feet east of signal 1441, the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The brakes functioned properly at all points where used en route. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. Because of a strong wind and falling snow, visibility was restricted to a distance of about 1,500 feet. Signal 1411 displayed proceed-at-restricted-speed, and the enginemen called the indication. As the engine passed the signal the engineer moved the throttle to drifting position and made a service brake-pipe reduction, which reduced the speed to about 40 miles per hour. From that point westward on the descending grade the speed of the train gradually increased to about 50 miles per hour. When the engine was about 1,500 feet east of signal 1441, the enginemen observed simultaneously the signal displaying stop-and-proceed, lighted fuses in the vicinity of the signal and the caboose of the preceding train. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but he was unable to stop his train short of Extra 3807. The speed of Extra 3724 was about 40 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

The enginemen of Extra 3724 said that an east-bound freight train, which was moving on the eastward main track between signals 1411 and 1441, caused a considerable amount of the snow on the track to be disturbed, and it was blown in such manner that visibility was restricted considerably. They were of the opinion that this condition contributed to their failure to observe warning signals until too late to prevent the accident. If the speed of Extra 3724 had been controlled in accordance with the indications displayed by signals 1411 and 1441, this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train in accordance with signal indications.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of February, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.