

**INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON**

**REPORT NO. 3680
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR ENFIELD, N. C., ON
MARCH 17, 1956**

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SUMMARY

Date: March 17, 1956

Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line

Location: Enfield, N. C.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Portion of freight : Passenger train
train

Train numbers: 109 : 375

Locomotive numbers: Diesel-electric : Diesel-electric
units 886, 850, units 507, 758,
851, and 332B and 510

Consists: 120 cars, caboose : 17 cars

Speeds: Standing : 28 m. p. h.

Operation: Movements with current of traffic by
timetable, train orders, and auto-
matic block-signal system; move-
ments against current of traffic
by train orders

Tracks: Double; 0°58' curve; 0.50 percent
ascending grade southward

Weather: Clear

Time: 6:43 p. m.

Casualties: 26 injured

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection
against a south-bound train moving
on the northward main track, as a
result of misunderstanding between
employees involved

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3680

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

April 23, 1956.

Accident near Enfield, N. C., on March 17, 1956, caused by failure to provide adequate protection against a south-bound train moving on the northward main track, as a result of a misunderstanding between the employees involved.

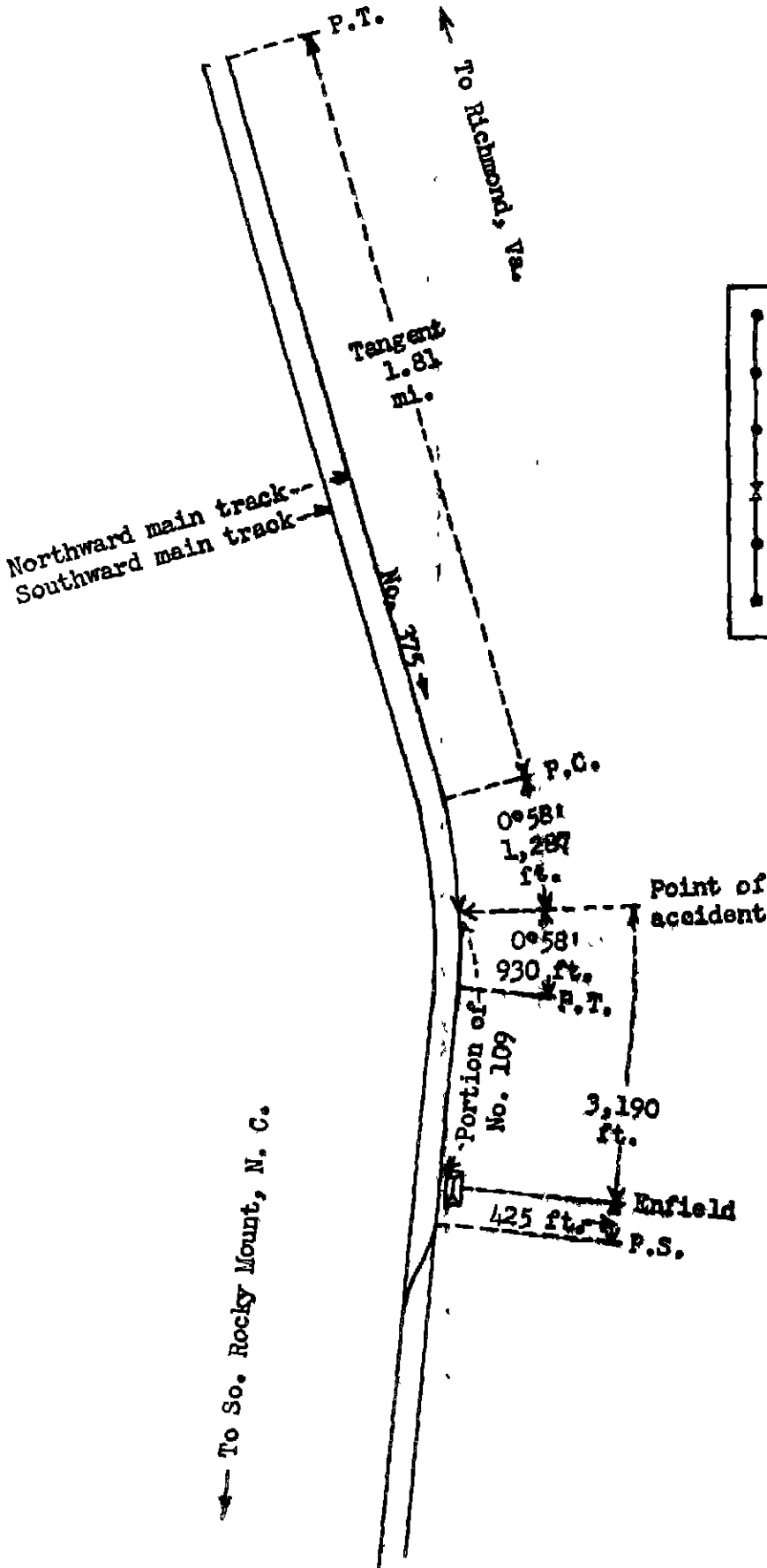
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On March 17, 1956, there was a collision between a passenger train and the forward portion of a freight train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Enfield, N. C., which resulted in the injury of 15 passengers, 8 dining-car employees, 1 mail porter, and 2 train-service employees.

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Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Clarke for consideration and disposition.



●	Richmond, Va.	88.7 mi.
●	Weldon Yard, N. C.	10.1 mi.
●	Ruggles	6.8 mi.
✕	Point of accident	0.6 mi.
●	Enfield	19.4 mi.
●	So. Rocky Mount, N. C.	

Report No. 3680
 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
 Near Enfield, N. C.
 March 17, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division, extending between Richmond, Va., and South Rocky Mount, N. C., 125.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders, and an automatic block-signal system supplemented by an intermittent inductive train-stop system. Trains moving against the current of traffic are operated by train orders. At Enfield, N. C., 106.2 miles south of Richmond, a trailing-point crossover connects the two main tracks. The north switch of this crossover is 425 feet south of the station. The accident occurred on the northward main track at a point 3,190 feet north of the station at Enfield. From the north there is a tangent 1.81 miles in length and a $0^{\circ}08'$ curve to the right 1,287 feet to the point of accident and 930 feet southward. The grade is 0.50 percent ascending southward at the point of accident.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

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. * * *

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way, when necessary, by the fireman or head brakeman.

* * *

102. When a train is disabled or stopped suddenly by an emergency application of the brakes or from other causes, adjacent tracks, * * * that are liable to be obstructed must at once be protected until it is ascertained that such tracks are safe and clear for the movement of trains.

D-1b2. When a train or engine crosses over to, or obstructs another track, unless otherwise provided, the movement must first be protected as prescribed by Rule 99 in both directions on that track.

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FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

D-R

Providing for a Movement Against The Current
of Traffic

(1.) No 1 Eng 500 has right over opposing trains
on northward track C to F.

The designated train must use the track specified
between the points named and has right over opposing
trains on that track between those points. * * *

The maximum authorized speeds for the trains involved
were 65 miles per hour for the freight train and 90 miles
per hour for the passenger train. The latter train was re-
stricted to 59 miles per hour when moving against the current
of traffic.

Description of Accident

No. 109, a south-bound first-class freight train, con-
sisted of Diesel-electric units 886, 850, 851, and 332B,
coupled in multiple-unit control, 120 cars, and a caboose.
This train passed Weldon Yard, 16.9 miles north of the point
of accident and the last open office, at 3:40 p. m., 41 min-
utes late. While it was moving on the southward main track
at a speed of 63 miles per hour the front truck of the fifty-
fourth car became derailed, and the train was stopped about
3:55 p. m. with the front end of this car fouling the north-
ward main track approximately 3 miles south of the initial
point of derailment and 2.5 miles north of the station at
Enfield. The rear 66 cars and the caboose were removed by
the locomotive of a following train and were left on the
southward main track at Ruggles, approximately 4 miles north
of the point at which the derailed car stopped. The first
53 cars were removed to Enfield and placed on the northward
main track with the rear end 3,190 feet north of the station.
The locomotive of No. 109 then returned to the derailed car.
When this car had been moved sufficiently to clear the north-
ward main track the locomotive returned to Enfield and was
coupled to the cars previously placed on the northward main
track. About 25 minutes later the rear end of this equipment
was struck by No. 375.

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No. 375, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 507, 758, and 510, coupled in multiple-unit control, nine express cars, one express-baggage car, five coaches, one dining car, and one sleeping car, in the order named. The fourteenth to sixteenth cars, inclusive, were of lightweight steel construction, and the other cars were of conventional all-steel construction. This train passed Weldon Yard at 4:05 p. m., 16 minutes late, and was stopped south of Ruggles in response to the signals of the flagman of No. 109. The locomotive of this train was used to move the rear portion of No. 109 to Ruggles, after which it was re-coupled to its train. At 6:25 p. m. train order No. 21 was issued by telephone to the conductor of No. 375 at Ruggles. This order read as follows:

NO 375 ENG 507 HAS RIGHT OVER OPPOSING TRAINS ON
NORTHWARD TRACK RUGGLES TO ENFIELD. OPERATOR
ENFIELD HANDLES SWITCHES. RUN CAREFULLY BY
DERAILED CAR NEAR 98-1/2 MILEPOST.

This train entered the northward main track and departed south-bound about 6:33 p. m. It passed the derailed car at reduced speed, and while moving on the northward main track at a speed of 28 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of the fifty-third car of No. 109.

In the forward portion of the train of No. 109, the second, third, and fourth rear cars, the rear truck of the fifth rear car, and the eighth to tenth rear cars, inclusive, were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the northward main track. The third, fourth, ninth, and tenth rear cars were badly damaged. The rear car and the seventh rear car, which were not derailed, were considerably damaged. No. 375 stopped with the front end of the locomotive 54 feet south of the point of collision. The rear wheels of the front truck of the fourth car were derailed. No other equipment of this train was derailed. The Diesel-electric units and the sixteenth car were somewhat damaged. The first nine cars and the twelfth to the fourteenth cars, inclusive, were slightly damaged.

The engineer and the fireman of No. 375 were injured.

The weather was clear and it was dusk at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6:43 p. m.

The locomotives of both trains and the caboose of No. 109 were provided with train communication equipment.

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Discussion

On the day of the accident the front truck of the fifty-fourth car of No. 109 became derailed as a result of a broken journal. The brakes became applied in emergency, and the train stopped with the locomotive approximately 2 miles north of the station at Enfield. The front end of the derailed car fouled the northward main track. The enginemen, a road foreman of engines, and the front brakeman were on the locomotive. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. Immediately after the train stopped the fireman alighted and proceeded southward to provide flag protection on the northward main track. The flagman said that when the train stopped he saw marks on the track structure in the vicinity of the caboose which indicated that equipment was derailed, and he immediately proceeded northward to provide flag protection on both main tracks. Soon afterward when No. 375 approached he gave stop signals and informed the engineer of No. 375 that equipment of No. 109 was derailed. He said that after the locomotive of this train had moved the rear 66 cars and the caboose of his train to Ruggles he informed the engineer and the conductor of this train, in accordance with instructions received from the front brakeman over the train communication equipment of the caboose, that both main tracks were obstructed and No. 375 was to remain at that point until further instructions were received. He then proceeded northward to provide protection on both main tracks and did not return to Ruggles until a following freight train arrived and picked up the rear portion of his train.

of No. 109

After the conductor and other members of the crew inspected the derailed car, the first 53 cars were detached and moved to Enfield. At this time the front brakeman remained in the vicinity of the derailed car to provide additional flag protection. The fireman used flagging signals to stop a north-bound passenger train in the vicinity of the crossover at Enfield. He informed the enginemen of the derailment and instructed them to remain at that point. He then returned to his locomotive. At Enfield the conductor of No. 109 communicated by telephone with the train dispatcher and the chief dispatcher and reported the derailment. He said that in response to his request the dispatcher authorized him to place the forward portion of his train on the northward main track. After this was done the locomotive returned, and all employees except the flagman assisted in efforts to move the fifty-fourth car clear of the northward main track. Later these employees were joined by a trainmaster. About 6:10 p. m. the derailed car was moved a sufficient distance to clear the northward main track, and the

employees then boarded the locomotive and returned to Enfield. The front brakeman re-coupled the locomotive to the cars previously placed on the northward main track. He said that he was in the vicinity of the crossover when the collision occurred. The train-order signal indicated Stop-and-receive-train-orders when the locomotive returned, and the conductor and the trainmaster proceeded to the station. The conductor was directed by the trainmaster to await further instructions. The trainmaster communicated by telephone with the dispatcher and reported that the derailed car had been moved clear of the northward main track. Soon afterward train order No. 21 was issued to the operator at Enfield and to the conductor of No. 375 at Ruggles. It was intended that the locomotive and the forward portion of the train of No. 109 precede No. 375 to South Rocky Mount. However, because Extra 128 North, en route to Enfield with wrecking equipment, was moving against the current of traffic on the southward main track in order to pass trains occupying the northward main track, it was necessary for No. 109 to wait at Enfield until that train arrived. The conductor of No. 109 said he was not aware that No. 375 was being operated against the current of traffic between Ruggles and Enfield until he saw the reflection of the headlight as that train was approaching immediately before the collision occurred.

After No. 375 departed from Ruggles the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in various locations in the cars of the train. The headlight was lighted brightly, and the oscillating white headlight was operating. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used. The members of the crew had read and understood train order No. 21. According to the tape of the speed-recording device, the speed of the train was reduced from a maximum of 58 miles per hour to about 12 miles per hour in the vicinity of the derailed car and was then increased to about 50 miles per hour. None of the members of the crew had been informed that the forward portion of No. 109 was occupying the northward main track. The enginemen saw the cars ahead, and when they determined that the cars were on the northward main track the engineer made an emergency application of the brakes. The speed had been reduced to about 28 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

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The operator at Enfield reported for duty at 5:40 p. m. He said that before train order No. 21 was issued, he informed the train dispatcher, in response to an inquiry, that the forward portion of the train of No. 109 was occupying the northward main track north of the station. He said that later, after the train order had been issued, the dispatcher instructed him to tell the trainmaster that No. 375 would use the northward main track. The train dispatcher was aware that the forward portion of No. 109 was occupying the northward main track at Enfield and that the flagman of No. 109 was providing flag protection in the vicinity of the rear portion of the train at Ruggles. He said that at the time he issued order No. 21 he expected other members of the crew of No. 109 to provide additional flag protection for the equipment at Enfield.

The investigation disclosed that before No. 375 was authorized to operate over the northward main track from Ruggles to Enfield the forward portion of No. 109 was placed on that track at Enfield. The flagman of No. 109 informed the crew of No. 375 that both main tracks were obstructed by a derailed car and directed them to remain at Ruggles until they received further instructions. When the derailed car was moved clear of the northward main track, this fact was reported to the train dispatcher by the trainmaster. The dispatcher was aware that the flagman of No. 109 was providing protection against following movements in the vicinity of the rear portion of the train at Ruggles, and he expected other members of the crew to provide additional protection for the portion of the train placed on the northward main track at Enfield. However, the conductor of No. 109 understood that his flagman was providing protection, and he had no communication with the dispatcher after he received permission to place the forward portion of his train on the northward main track. As a result of the misunderstanding between the employees involved, members of the crew of No. 375 had no information that cars were occupying the northward main track at Enfield, and no protection was provided for this equipment.

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Cause

This accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection against a south-bound train moving on the northward main track, as a result of a misunderstanding between the employees involved.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-third day of April, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,
Secretary.