

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2704  
THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
NEAR FLORENCE, S. C., ON  
JUNE 3, 1943

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Atlantic Coast Line

Date: June 3, 1943

Location: Florence, S. C.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Work : Freight

Train numbers: Work Extra 1043 : Second 211

Engine numbers: 1043 : 1749-1617

Consist: 1 auxiliary water : 35 cars, 2  
car, 5 cars cabooses

Speed: Standing : 6-10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders.  
Accident occurred within yard limits

Track: Single; tangent; practically level

Weather: Clear

Time: About 10:20 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 2 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed  
of following train moving within  
yard limits

Recommendation: That the Atlantic Coast Line Rail-  
road Company clarify its requirements  
governing operation within yard  
limits and not permit change in the  
prescribed practice without proper  
modification of its operating rules

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2704

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

THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

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July 19, 1943.

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Accident near Florence, S. C., on June 3, 1943, caused by  
failure properly to control speed of following train  
moving within yard limits.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

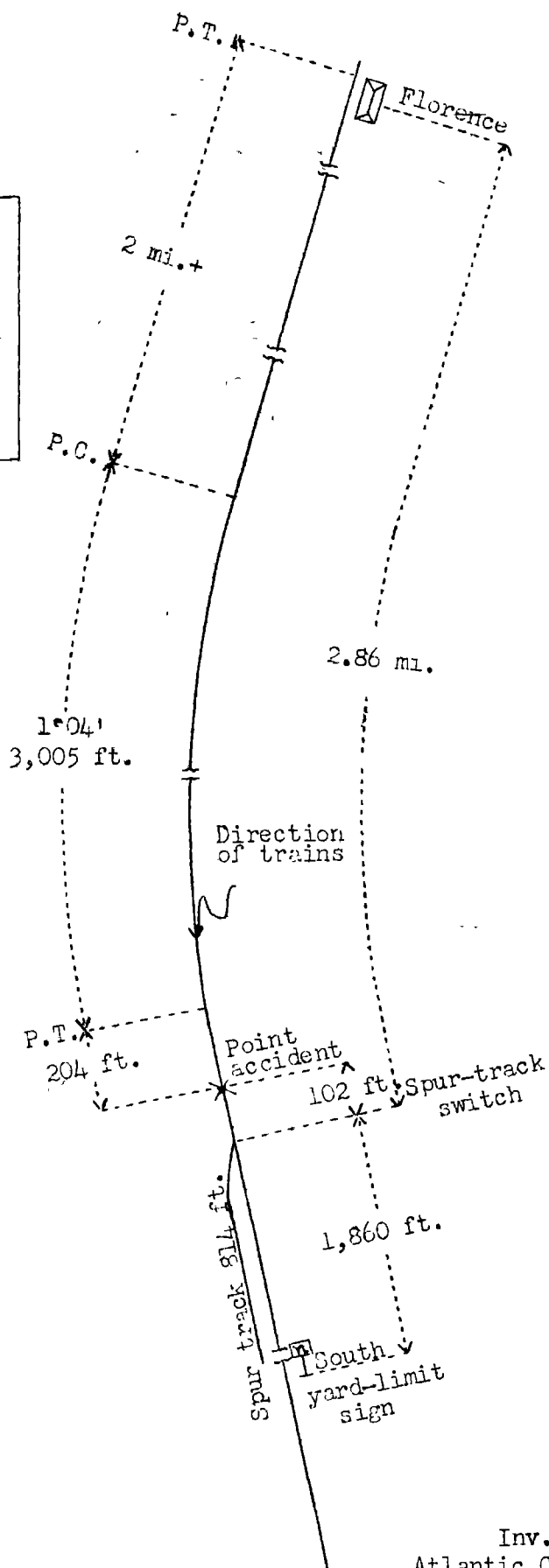
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On June 3, 1943, there was a rear-end collision between a work train and a freight train on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Florence, S. C., which resulted in the death of one mechanical-department employee, and the injury of one mechanical-department employee and one train-service employee.

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<sup>1</sup>Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.

- Florence, S. C.  
2.84 mi.
- X Point of accident  
0.02 mi.
- Spur-track switch  
2.64 mi.
- Ebenezer  
132.50 mi.
- Robbins, S. C.



Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Columbia District extending between Florence and Robbins, S. C., 138 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line, within yard limits, over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. At a point 2.86 miles south of the station at Florence a spur track 814 feet in length paralleled the main track on the west, and was connected to the main track by a facing-point switch for south-bound movements. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 102 feet north of the spur-track switch. Approaching from the north there were, in succession, a tangent more than 2 miles in length, a 1°04' curve to the left 3,005 feet and a tangent 204 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. In the vicinity of the point of accident the grade was practically level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

93. Within yard limits the main track may be used, clearing the time of first-class trains five minutes.

Second, third and fourth class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

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 fusees.

\* \* \*

When a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must take such action as may be necessary to insure full protection. \* \* \* by day when the view is obscured, lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 45 miles per hour.

### Description of Accident

Work Extra 1043 consisted of one derrick car, one auxiliary water car, one tool car, one supply car, engine 1043; headed south, one dining car and one dormitory car, in the order named. At Florence the crew received copies of three train orders, of which one was train order No. 238 reading in part as follows:

Eng 1043 works extra 9 05 a m until 9 01  
p m between Florence and Ebenezer pro-  
tecting against third and fourth class  
trains. \* \* \*

Ebenezer is located 5.5 miles south of Florence. Work Extra 1043 departed southward from Florence about 9:55 a. m., according to the statement of the conductor, entered the spur track and stopped about 10:17 a. m., with the rear car standing on the main track 102 feet north of the spur-track switch. About 3 minutes later the rear end was struck by Second 211.

Second 211, a south-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engines 1749 and 1617, coupled, 26 loaded and 9 empty cars and 2 cabooses. At Florence the crew received copies of six train orders, of which one was train order No. 238. This train departed from Florence at 10 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 7 hours 10 minutes late, and while moving at a speed variously estimated as 6 to 10 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Work Extra 1043.

The rear car of Work Extra 1043 was demolished. The rear end of the car next ahead of the rear car was badly damaged. The front end of engine 1749 of Second 211 was considerably damaged.

From the left side of a south-bound engine the view of the point where the accident occurred was restricted to 1,800 feet, because of trees and track curvature.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 10:20 a. m.

The engineer of Work Extra 1043 was injured.

Discussion

The rules of this carrier governing operation within yard limits provide that all trains except first-class trains must be operated prepared to stop unless the way is seen or known to be clear.

About 3 minutes after Work Extra 1043 stopped at the spur-track switch, its rear end was struck by Second 211. Work Extra 1043 was approaching the spur-track switch at a speed of 15 or 20 miles per hour. The conductor and the front brakeman were on the front end of the fourth car ahead of the engine so that they could couple the cars which were to be picked up on the spur track. The flagman, who was on the rear end of the rear car, said he misunderstood instructions from the conductor and was not aware that his train was to stop at the spur track. When his train stopped he went back to provide flag protection, and had reached a point about 135 feet north of the rear of his train when he heard a train approaching from the north. He ran toward the approaching train and had reached a point about 800 feet to the rear of his train and was giving stop signals with a red flag when the engine of Second 211 passed him. Because of track curvature and vegetation adjacent to the track, from a south-bound engine the view of the track ahead was materially restricted.

As Second 211 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 30 miles per hour. The enginemen of the first engine and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer of the first engine said he sounded the engine-whistle signal for a highway grade crossing north of the point where the accident occurred, then, when the engine reached a point about 2,000 feet north of the point where the accident occurred, he made an 8-pound brake-pipe reduction, which reduced the speed to 20 or 25 miles per hour. Soon afterward the fireman and the front brakeman saw a flagman giving stop signals with a red flag from a point 800 or 900 feet north of the rear of the preceding train, and they called a warning to the engineer. The engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but he was unable to stop his train short of the rear end of Work Extra 1043. The members of the crew of Second 211 estimated the speed of their train as 6 to 10 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The brakes had been tested and had functioned properly.

Certain officials of this carrier interpreted Rule 99 as being applicable to the operation of Work Extra 1043 within yard limits, and the employees involved concurred at the investigation; however, no one contended that Rule 93 was not in effect. Such an interpretation would nullify the provisions of Rule 93. Instead of providing an additional safeguard, it would create confusion and uncertainty and lead to the condition

which resulted in this accident. Under Rule 93 the speed of Second 211 was required to be so controlled that it could be stopped short of a train, an obstruction or a switch not properly lined, but this train was being operated at a speed of approximately 30 miles per hour, and evidence was to the effect that this was common practice. The requirements covering operation within yard limits should be clearly set forth in the rules. Oral instructions should not be used to prescribe practices which are contrary to the established rules.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving within yard limits.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company clarify its requirements governing operation within yard limits and not permit change in the prescribed practice without proper modification of its operating rules.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this nineteenth day of July, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.