

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3170
ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT TENNILLE, ALA., ON
FEBRUARY 26, 1948

SUMMARY

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|-------------------|---|
| Railroad: | Atlantic Coast Line |
| Date: | February 26, 1948 |
| Location: | Tennille, Ala. |
| Kind of accident: | Rear-end collision |
| Trains involved: | Freight : Freight |
| Train numbers: | Extra 2004 West : 215 |
| Engine numbers: | 2004 : 2002 |
| Consists: | 51 cars, caboose : 21 cars, caboose |
| Estimated speeds: | Standing : 40 m. p. h. |
| Operation: | Timetable and train orders |
| Track: | Single; tangent; 0.60 percent ascending grade westward |
| Weather: | Clear |
| Time: | 2:27 p. m. |
| Casualties: | 1 killed; 2 injured |
| Cause: | Failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train |

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3170

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

April 16, 1948

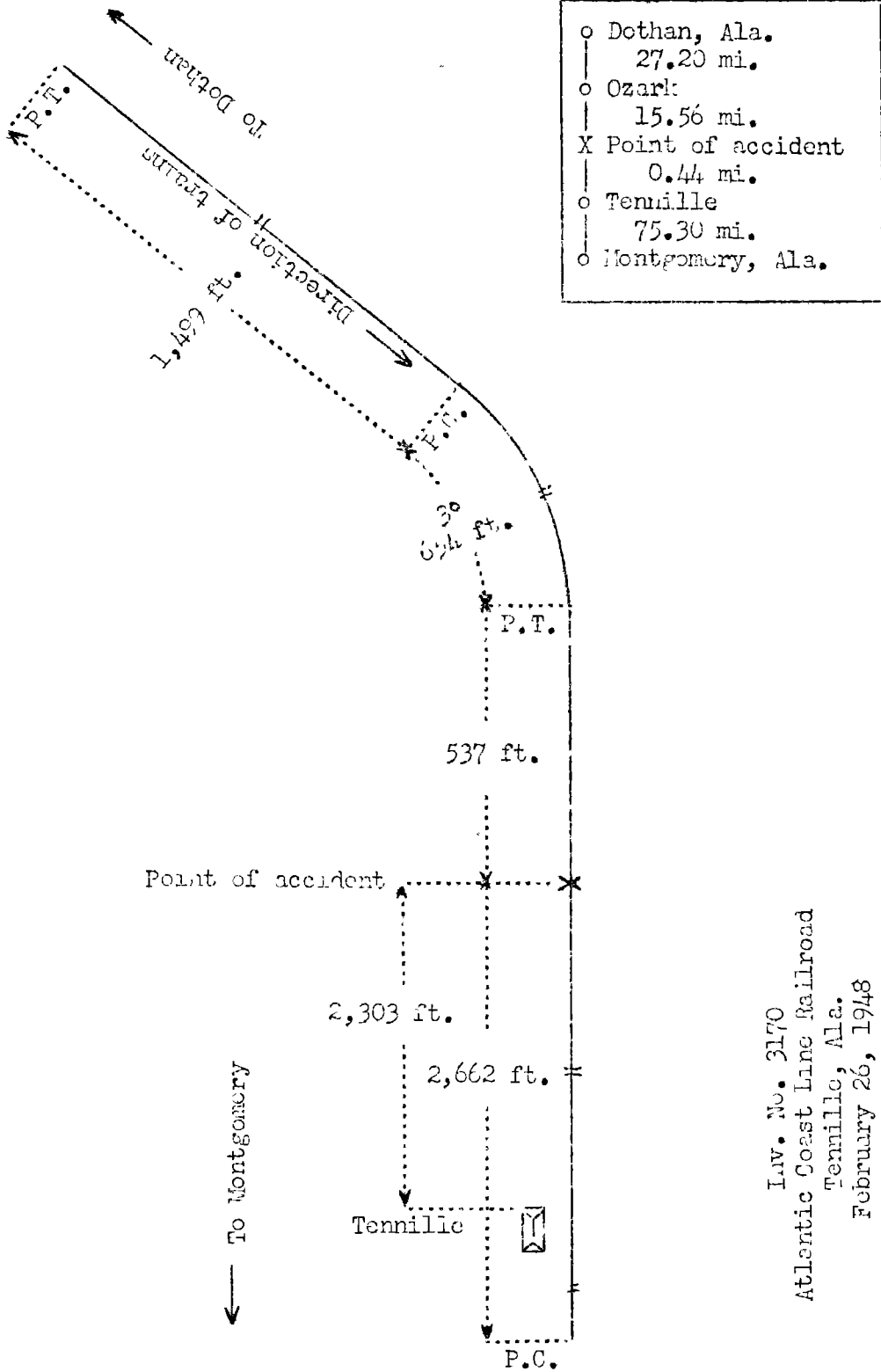
Accident at Tennille, Ala., on February 26, 1948, caused
by failure to provide adequate protection for the
preceding train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 26, 1948, there was a rear-end collision
between two freight trains on the Atlantic Coast Line Rail-
road at Tennille, Ala., which resulted in the death of one
employee, and the injury of two employees.

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



- o Dothan, Ala.
27.20 mi.
- o Ozark
15.56 mi.
- X Point of accident
0.44 mi.
- o Tennille
75.30 mi.
- o Montgomery, Ala.

Tr. No. 3170
 Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
 Tennille, Ala.
 February 26, 1948

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery District extending between Dothan and Montgomery, Ala., 118.5 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track 42.76 miles west of Dothan and 2,303 feet east of the station at Tennille. From the east there are, in succession, a tangent 1,499 feet in length, a 3° curve to the right 654 feet, and a tangent 537 feet to the point of accident and 2,662 feet westward. The grade for west-bound trains varies between 0.12 and 1.08 percent ascending throughout a distance of 2,098 feet immediately east of the point of accident, where it is 0.60 percent ascending.

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

11. A fusee on or near the track burning red must not be passed until burned out, * * *

14. Engine Whistle Signals

Note: The signals prescribed are illustrated by "o" for short sounds; "___" for longer sounds. * * *

Sound Indication

* * *

(c) ___ o o o Flagman protect rear of train.

* * *

15. The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to reduce speed and look out for a train ahead or obstruction. The explosion of one torpedo will indicate the same as two, but the use of two is required.

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals--A red flag.
Torpedoes and Fusees.

* * *

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

85. * * *

* * * Extra trains may * * * run ahead of second, third * * * class trains * * *

* * *

91. Unless some form of block signals is used, trains in the same direction must keep at least ten minutes apart, except in closing up at stations.

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 fuseses.

* * *

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 night, or by day when the view is obscured, lighted fuseses must be thrown off at proper intervals.

* * *

99 (c). When a train is stopped for any reason, or is delayed under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by a following train * * * engineman will give signals as shown in Rule 14 (c). * * *

The maximum authorized speeds were 40 miles per hour for the preceding train and 45 miles per hour for the following train.

Description of Accident

Extra 2004 West, a west-bound freight train, consisting of engine 2004, 51 cars and a caboose, departed from Ozark, the last open office, 16 miles east of Tennille, at 1:56 p. m., and stopped about 2:24 p. m. on the main track at Tennille, with the rear end standing 2,303 feet east of the station. About 3 minutes later the rear end was struck by No. 215.

No. 215, a west-bound third-class freight train, consisting of engine 2002, 21 cars and a caboose, departed from Ozark at 2:07 p. m., 7 hours 10 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it collided with Extra 2004 West.

The caboose, the rear car, the rear truck of the second rear car, and the fourth rear car of Extra 2004 West were derailed. The rear end of the third rear car was knocked off center. The caboose was demolished. The rear three cars were badly damaged. The engine, the tender, and the first four cars of No. 215 were derailed and badly damaged. The front truck of the fifth car was derailed.

The fireman of No. 215 was killed, and the engineer and the front brakeman of this train were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:27 p. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 15.33 trains.

Discussion

About 3 minutes after Extra 2004 West, a west-bound freight train, stopped on the main track at Tennille the rear end was struck by No. 215, a west-bound third-class freight train. When the accident occurred the tender of Extra 2004 West was being supplied with water. The enginemen and the front brakeman were in the vicinity of the engine. These employees were not aware of anything being wrong until the collision occurred.

When Extra 2004 West was preparing to stop at Tennille the engineer sounded the engine whistle signal for the flagman to provide protection for the train, and when the train stopped he again sounded the signal. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The flagman said that, about 9 minutes before the collision occurred, when his train was in the vicinity of Arifton, 4.1 miles east of Tennille, he dropped two lighted 10-minute red fusees from the rear of the caboose. About 4 minutes before the collision occurred, when the rear of the train was about 2,900 feet east of the point where the caboose stopped, he dropped another lighted 10-minute red fusee, which lay flatly and a short distance north of the north ends of the ties. When his train stopped,

the flagman heard the following train approaching, then he alighted from the caboose and ran eastward to a point about 485 feet east of the rear of his train, where he placed one torpedo on the north rail, and gave stop signals with a lighted red fusee and a red flag until the engine of No. 215 passed him. He said his signals were not acknowledged by the engineer of No. 215.

As No. 215 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 45 miles per hour. No train order restricting this train from moving at maximum authorized speed had been issued. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The enginemen, and the front brakeman, who was on the engine, were maintaining a lookout ahead. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The first the surviving members of the crew knew of anything being wrong was when their engine was rounding the curve immediately east of the tangent on which the accident occurred, then the engineer saw the caboose of the preceding train about 1,000 feet distant. He immediately moved the throttle lever to closed position and the brake valve to emergency position. He estimated the speed of his train as about 40 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The fireman was fatally injured. The engineer and the front brakeman were positive that they did not hear or see any warning signal at any point between Arifton and the point of accident until they were preparing to alight from the engine. Then the engineer saw stop signals being given with a red flag from a point about 350 feet to the rear of the caboose of the preceding train.

Because of an embankment and trees on the inside of the curve immediately east of the point where the accident occurred, the view of the track ahead from the engine of a west-bound train is materially restricted.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. The only provision for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and by flagman's signals. The rules require that a following train must be spaced at least 10 minutes behind a preceding train. In this case the preceding train departed from Ozark, 15.56 miles east of the point where the accident occurred, 11 minutes before the following train departed from that station. There was no open office between Ozark and the point where the collision occurred. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this sixteenth day of April, 1948.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.