

RAILROAD ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Report No 3829

THE COLORADO AND SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

WALSENBURG, COLO

NOVEMBER 26, 1958

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

Washington

SUMMARY

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| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| DATE | November 26, 1958 | |
| RAILROAD | Colorado and Southern | Denver and Rio Grande Western |
| LOCATION | Walsenburg, Colo | |
| KIND OF ACCIDENT | Rear-end collision | |
| TRAINS INVOLVED | Passenger | Freight |
| TRAIN NUMBERS | No 1 | Extra 5511 South |
| LOCOMOTIVE NUMBERS | Diesel electric units 9981A and 9952B | Diesel-electric units 5517, 5512, 5433, 5513, and 5514 |
| CONSISTS | 11 cars | 20 cars, caboose |
| SPEEDS | 40 m p h | Standing |
| OPERATION | Timetable, train orders | |
| TRACK | Double, tangent, 0.25 percent ascending grade southward | |
| WEATHER | Clear | |
| TIME | 6 10 p m | |
| CASUALTIES | 21 injured | |
| CAUSE | An inferior train occupying the main track on the time of a following first class train without flag protection, as a result of failure properly to check a train register | |

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO 3829

IN THE MATTER OF MAKING ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORTS UNDER
THE ACCIDENT REPORTS ACT OF MAY 6, 1910THE COLORADO AND SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
AND
THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY

April 1, 1959

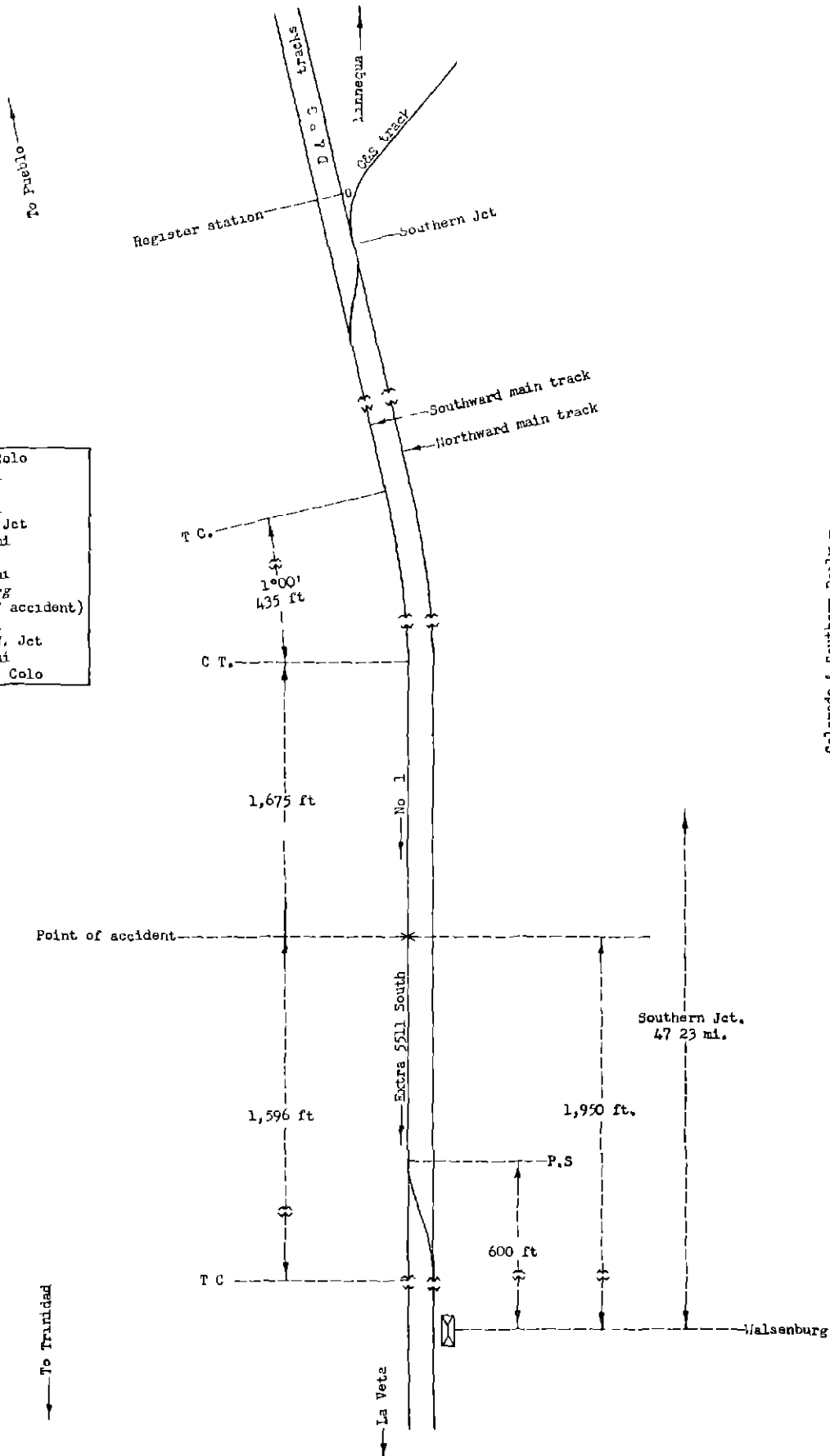
Accident at Walsenburg, Colo , on November 26, 1958, caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of a following first-class train without flag protection, as a result of a failure properly to check a train register

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹*FREAS, Commissioner*

On November 26, 1958, there was a rear-end collision between a passenger train of the Colorado and Southern Railway Company and a freight train of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company at Walsenburg, Colo , which resulted in the injury of 2 train-service employees, 1 railway post office clerk, and 18 passengers

¹Under authority of section 17 (2) of the *Interstate Commerce Act* the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Freas for consideration and disposition

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| ○ | Pueblo, Colo |
| | 3 98 mi |
| ○ | Minnequa |
| | 1 87 mi |
| ○ | Southern Jet |
| | 30 86 mi |
| ○ | Lascar |
| | 16 37 mi |
| X | Walsenburg |
| | (Point of accident) |
| | 0 12 mi |
| ○ | D & R G.W. Jet |
| | 40 71 mi |
| ○ | Trinidad, Colo |



Colorado & Southern Railway
 Walsenburg, Colo
 November 26, 1958

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Southern Division of the Colorado and Southern Railway extending between Minnequa, 3 98 miles south of Pueblo, and Trinidad, Colo , 89 93 miles, and on that part of the Pueblo Division of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad extending between Pueblo and La Veta, Colo , 71 4 miles. Between Southern Jct and D & R G W Junction, 1 87 miles and 49 22 miles south of Minnequa, respectively, the C & S and the D & R G W main tracks form a double-track line over which trains of both carriers are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. C & S timetable and operating rules govern the movement of trains on both main tracks. At Walsenburg, Colo , 47 23 miles south of Southern Jct , yard limit signs are located about 3,740 feet south and 1 84 miles north of the station. A crossover connects the main tracks at Walsenburg. The north switch of this crossover is facing point for southbound movements on the southward main track, and it is located about 600 feet north of the station. The accident occurred within yard limits on the southward main track at a point about 1,950 feet north of the station at Walsenburg. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent of considerable length, a 1°00' curve to the right 453 feet, and a tangent 1,675 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance southward. The grade for southbound trains varies between 0 25 percent and 1 20 percent ascending throughout a distance of 1 42 miles immediately north of the point of accident, and it is 0 25 percent ascending at the point of accident.

A train register is located at Southern Jct. It is in a booth, between the main tracks of the C & S and the D & R G W , about 400 feet north of a crossover which southbound C & S trains use to enter the southward main track of the jointly operated double-track line.

C & S operating rules read in part as follows:

73 Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

S-83 A train must not leave its initial station on any subdivision, or a junction, * * * until it has been ascertained whether all trains due, which are superior, have arrived or left.

Stations at which train registers are located will be designated by timetable.

S-83 (a) Information called for on train register must be properly inscribed thereon by those acting in the capacity of conductor, * * *

Unless otherwise provided, at register stations conductors will personally fill out Form 1648 and must include all superior trains which are overdue and furnish to engineman, who will be held equally responsible with conductor as to all overdue superior trains being listed.

86 Unless otherwise provided, an inferior train must be clear at the time a superior train in the same direction is due to leave the next station in the rear where time is shown, but not less than five minutes.

93 * * *

Within yard limits, * * * extra trains and engines may use the main track without protection as prescribed by Rule 99, except in case of failure to clear first class trains, * * *

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 headings and instructions shown on C & S Form 1648 are as follows

CHECK OF TRAIN REGISTER

At _____

_____ Conductor

Train _____ At _____ M _____ 19 _____

| TRAIN | ARRIVED | LEFT | SIGNALS |
|-------|---------|------|---------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

*** *** *** ***

Before leaving a register station, the conductor must enter on this blank the numbers of all trains due which are superior that have arrived or left. This form must be delivered to enginemen by conductor or trainman. Enginemen must not leave such stations unless they have received this, and must know that no such train is omitted.

C & S timetable instructions read in part as follows

SOUTHERN JCT

Southward first-class trains will register unless instructed otherwise by train order

According to the C & S timetable in effect on the day of the accident, C & S No 1, a southbound first-class passenger train, was scheduled to depart from Southern Jct at 3:37 p.m. Because of the time element, no other southbound first-class train is involved in this report.

The maximum authorized speed for southbound passenger trains in the immediate vicinity of the point of accident is 58 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

D & R G W Extra 5511 South, a southbound freight train, consisted of diesel-electric units 5511, 5512, 5433, 5513, and 5514, coupled in multiple-unit control, 20 cars and a caboose. At 4:45 p.m. this train departed from Pueblo, where the members of the crew received copies of Clearance Form A with copies of several train orders not pertinent to this report. The copies of the clearance form contained a footnote, which read as follows:

EXTRA 702 D SOUTH LEAVE MINNEQUA ABOUT 401 PM
NO 1 LEAVE MINNEQUA ABOUT 425 PM

Extra 5511 South stopped at Southern Jct about 4 55 p m and approximately 5 minutes later, after the front brakeman checked a train register, it entered the southward main track of the jointly operated double-track line and departed from Southern Jct. At 5 05 p m, this train stopped within yard limits on the southward main track at Walsenburg, and with the rear end at a point approximately 1,950 feet north of the station. About 5 minutes later the rear end was struck by C & S No 1.

No 1, a southbound first-class C & S passenger train, consisted of diesel-electric units 9981A and 9952B, coupled in multiple-unit control, 1 mail car, 1 baggage car, 1 dormitory-lounge car, 1 dinette-coach, 2 coaches, 1 dining car, 3 sleeping cars, and 1 lounge car, in the order named. All cars, except the 6th car, were provided with tightlock couplers. This train departed from Pueblo, 5 85 miles north of Southern Jct, at 4 18 p m, 54 minutes late, passed Minnequa, the last open office, at 5 13 p m, 1 hour 40 minutes late, stopped at Southern Jct to permit the conductor to enter the prescribed information in the train register located at that point, entered the southward main track of the jointly operated double-track line, departed from Southern Jct at 5 18 p m, 1 hour 41 minutes late, passed Lascar, 16 37 miles north of Walsenburg, at 5 35 p m, passed the north yard limit sign at Walsenburg, and while moving at a speed of about 40 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device, it struck the rear end of D & R G W Extra 5511 South.

The locomotive of No 1 stopped with the front end at a point 339 feet south of the point of accident. Both diesel-electric units and the 1st car were derailed and stopped upright in line with the track structure. No separations occurred. The caboose and the 16th to 20th cars, inclusive, of Extra 5511 South were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the track structure. The 1st diesel-electric unit of No 1 was heavily damaged, the 2nd unit and the 1st to 5th cars, inclusive, were somewhat damaged, and the 6th to 11th cars, inclusive, were slightly damaged. The caboose of Extra 5511 South was destroyed, 1 derailed car was heavily damaged, 3 were considerably damaged, and 1 was slightly damaged.

The conductor of Extra 5511 South and the flagman of No 1 were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 6 10 p m.

Discussion

Before entering the southward main track of the jointly operated double-track line on the day of the accident, D & R G W Extra 5511 South stopped at Southern Jct with the front end in the vicinity of the train register booth. The front brakeman alighted from the locomotive, proceeded to the booth, and checked the register to determine whether C & S No 1, a southbound first-class passenger train had departed from Southern Jct. He did not use a Form 1648, "Check of Train Register," in his check of the register, and he said he did not see a supply of Form 1648 in the booth. Upon his return to the locomotive, the front brakeman told the engineer that No 1 had departed, without signals, from Southern Jct. The engineer did not ask the front brakeman for a copy of Form 1648 showing the arrival and departure of No 1 at Southern Jct, and both he and the front brakeman said that it was not a practice of southbound D & R G W train crews to utilize that form when making checks of the train register at Southern Jct. The conductor remained in the caboose during this stop and he said that he had no direct knowledge of whether the front brakeman

checked the register at Southern Jct on the day of the accident. He said that it was customary for front brakemen of his crews to check that train register, and that when Extra 5511 South entered the southward main track on the day of the accident he assumed that No. 1 had previously departed southbound from Southern Jct. Extra 5511 South entered the southward main track and departed from Southern Jct about 5:00 p. m. It arrived in Walsenburg and stopped about 6:05 p. m., within yard limits, and with the front end a short distance north of the crossover located approximately 600 feet north of the station. After the locomotive was detached from the train to perform switching service, it was moved over the crossover and then southward on the northward main track to the station. During this movement the front brakeman remained in the general vicinity of the crossover to line switches and check cars on a spur track in preparation for switching operations. Since the conductor and the flagman had assumed that Extra 5511 South was following No. 1 on the southward main track, and no other southbound first-class train was due at Walsenburg for several hours, they left the rear end of Extra 5511 South without flag protection and proceeded to the front end in order to assist in the switching movements. When the locomotive of Extra 5511 South arrived at the station, the enginemen questioned the station operator as to the whereabouts of No. 8, a C & S northbound first-class train. The operator provided them with the information requested, and then informed the enginemen that No. 1 had passed Lascar, 16.37 miles north of Walsenburg, at 5:53 p. m. On learning that No. 1 was following Extra 5511 South, instead of preceding it, the engineer instructed the fireman, who was at the controls, to move the locomotive rapidly northward on the northward main track, in an attempt to provide flag protection against No. 1. The collision occurred before the enginemen could provide flag protection, and while the other members of the train crew were in the vicinity of the front end of that portion of Extra 5511 South standing on the southward main track.

C & S No. 1 stopped at Southern Jct about 5:18 p. m. to permit the conductor to enter information in the train register at that point as prescribed by the rules. Shortly afterward, it entered the southward main track and proceeded southbound from Southern Jct. As it was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 58 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device. The enginemen were in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive, and the members of the train crew were at various locations in the cars of the train. The brakes of the train had been tested and they had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted, and the oscillating headlight was operating. As the train approached the north end of the Walsenburg yard, the engineer made a service application of the brakes in preparation for a stop at the Walsenburg station. This application of the brakes reduced the speed of the train to approximately 40 miles per hour. The engineer said that when the train approached a point about 700 feet north of the point of accident he saw dimly lighted markers on the caboose of Extra 5511 South, and the reflection of the headlights from a rear window of the caboose. The fireman did not see the caboose markers, but saw the reflection of the headlights at the same time as the engineer and both enginemen immediately operated brake valves for an emergency application of the brakes. The engineer and the fireman left the control compartment shortly before No. 1 collided with the rear end of Extra 5511 South at a speed of approximately 40 miles per hour, as indicated by the tape of the speed-recording device.

During the investigation a trainmaster said that he and a roadmaster had stopped at Southern Jct while en route to the scene of the accident about two hours after the collision occurred. He said they had found the train register booth provided with a supply of Form 1648, "Check of Train Register."

C & S No 1 was scheduled to depart from Southern Jct at 3 37 p m According to the train register, it departed from that point at 3 55 p m on November 25, 1958, the day preceding the date of the accident On the day of the accident, No 1 departed from Southern Jct at 5 18 p m , approximately 18 minutes after the departure of Extra 5511 South from the same point The investigation disclosed that the information given by the front brakeman to the engineer of Extra 5511 South, regarding the movement of No 1 at Southern Jct , pertained to the movement of No 1 on November 25, 1958, the day preceding the date of the accident

C & S timetable instructions require southward first-class trains to be registered at Southern Jct C & S operating rules provide that a train must not leave its initial station on any subdivision, or a junction, unless it has been ascertained whether all trains due, which are superior, have arrived or left The operating rules also provide that at register stations conductors will personally fill out Form 1648 and must include all superior trains which are overdue and furnish to engineers, who will be held equally responsible with conductor as to all overdue superior trains being listed

In the instant case it is probable that the accident would not have occurred had crew members of D & R G W Extra 5511 South complied with the C & S rules and instructions pertaining to checks of the train register at Southern Jct

Cause

This accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of a following first-class train without flag protection, as a result of a failure properly to check a train register

Dated at Washington, D C , this first
day of April, 1959

By the Commission, Commissioner Freas

(SEAL)

HAROLD D McCOY,

Secretary

Interstate Commerce Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

RETURN AFTER FIVE DAYS

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION