INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2782

THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT POMPANO, FLA., ON

MARCH 5, 1944

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Florida East Coast	
Date:	March 5, 1944	
Location:	Pompano, Fla.	
Kind of accident:	Side collision	
Trains involved:	Passenger	: Engine and cars
Train number:	First 176	:
Engine numbers:	449	: 705
Consist:	15 cars	: 13 cars
Estimated speed:	20 m. p. h.	: 5 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system	
Track:	Double; tangent; 0.15 percent ascending grade northward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	9:06 p. m.	
Casualties:	27 injured	
Cause:	Crossover switch being opened immediately in front of approaching engine when a train was passing on adjoining track	
Recommendation:	That the Florida East Coast Railway Company install electric switch-locking at main-track hand-operated switches in automatic block-signal territory	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2782

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

THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

April 17, 1944.

Accident at Pompano, Fla., on March 5, 1944, caused by a crossover switch being opened immediately in front of an approaching engine when a train was passing on adjoining track.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Chairman:

On March 5, 1944, there was a side collision between a passenger train and an engine on the Florida East Coast Railway at Pompano, Fla., which resulted in the injury of 27 passengers.

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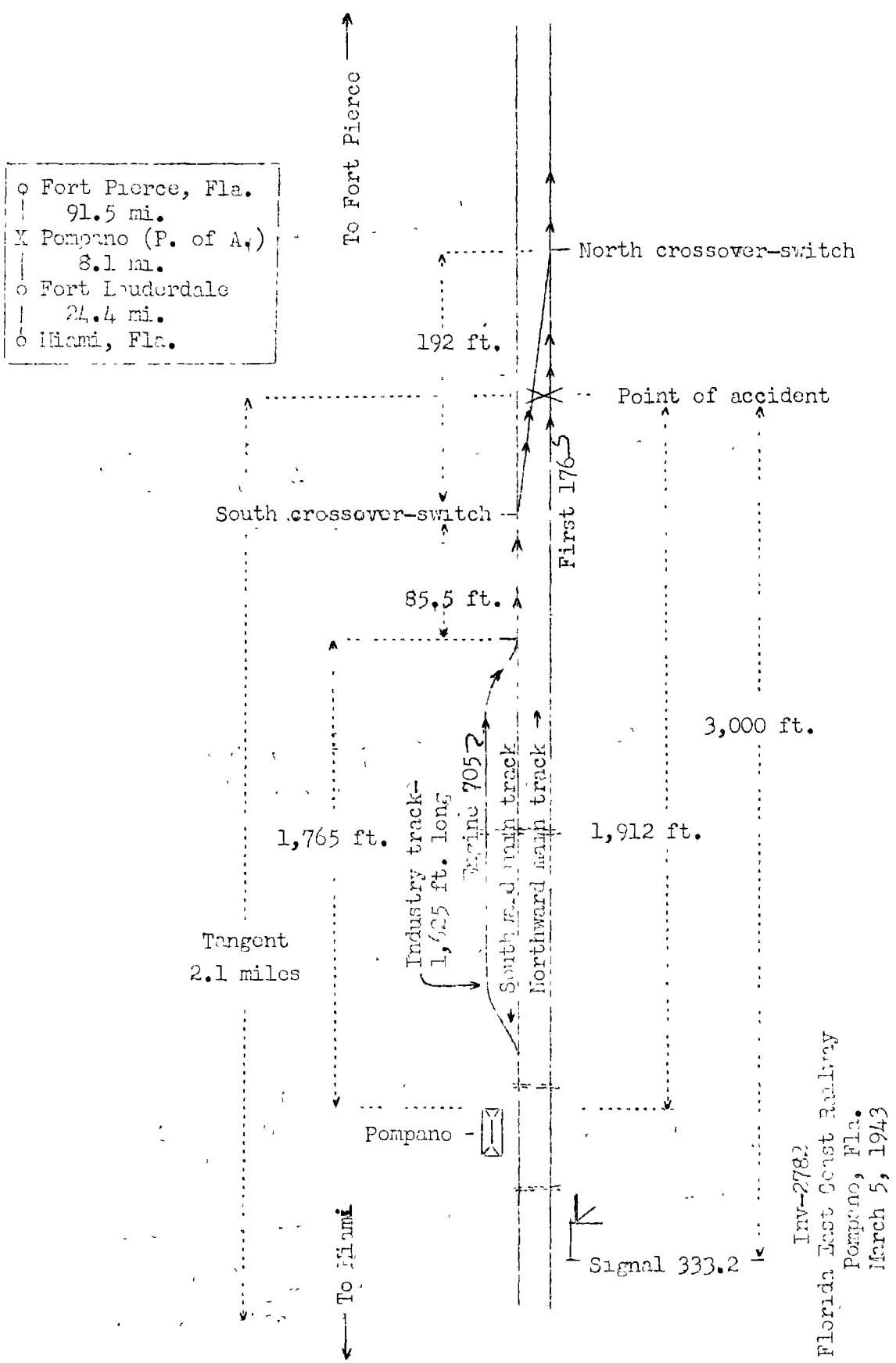
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Chairman Patterson for consideration and disposition.


Fort Pierce, Fla.
91.5 mi.
Pompano (P. of A.)
8.1 mi.
Fort Lauderdale
24.4 mi.
Miami, Fla.
To Fort Pierce
North crossover-switch
192 ft.
Point of accident
South crossover-switch
First 176.5
85.5 ft.
3,000 ft.
Industry track
1,625 ft. long
Engine 7052
South main track
Northward main track
1,765 ft.
1,912 ft.
Tangent
2.1 miles
Pompano
To Miami
Signal 333.2
Inv-2782
Florida East Coast Railway
Pompano, Fla.
March 5, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad designated as the Fourth District and extending between Miami and Fort Pierce, Fla., 124 miles. This was a double-track line over which trains moving with the current of traffic were operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. At Pompano an industry track 1,625 feet in length paralleled the southward main track on the west. The north switch of the industry track was 1,765 feet north of the station. The south switch of a crossover 192 feet long, which connected the main tracks, was 85.5 feet north of the north switch of the industry track, and was trailing-point for movements with the current of traffic. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the northward main track and the crossover. The main tracks were tangent throughout a distance of 2.1 miles south of Pompano and a considerable distance northward. The grade for north-bound trains was 0.15 percent ascending.

The switch-stand for the south switch of the crossover was on the west side of the southward main track, and was of the hand-throw low-stand type. No light or target was provided.

Automatic signal 333.2, which governed north-bound movements on the northward main track, was 3,000 feet south of the point of accident. This signal was of the three-indication, color-light type, and was continuously lighted.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

> 104. * * *, when practicable, the engineman must see that the switches nearest the engine are properly set.
>
> * * *
>
> Neither switch to a cross-over between main tracks must be unlocked during the passage of a train on either track.
>
> * * *

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train was 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

First 176, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 449, four express cars, one passenger-baggage car, six coaches, three Pullman sleeping cars and one baggage car, in the order named. The third, fourth and fifteenth cars were of steel-underframe construction and the remainder were of all-steel construction. This train departed from Fort Lauderdale, 8.1 miles south of Pompano and the last open office, at 8:51 p. m., 13 minutes late, passed signal 333.2, which displayed proceed, stopped at the station at Pompano, and departed at 9:05 p. m., 15 minutes late, and while it was moving on the northward main track at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour the sixth car was struck by engine 705 at the fouling point of the crossover.

Engine 705, of Extra 705 North, a north-bound freight train, was engaged in switching operations at Pompano. About 9:06 p. m., after this engine had moved a cut of 13 cars northward from the industry track to the southward main track, it entered the crossover at the south switch, and while moving at an estimated speed of 5 miles per hour it struck First 176.

The rear portion of the left side of the sixth car of First 176 was slightly damaged. The seventh and eighth cars were derailed and stopped, badly damaged, in line with the main tracks and leaning at an angle of about 45 degrees to the east, with the front end of the seventh car about 135 feet north of the point of accident. The front truck of the ninth car was derailed. Engine 705 was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, upright and in line with the crossover.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:06 p. m.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that the conductor of Extra 705 instructed the members of his crew that their engine would use the southward main track in switching cars from the industry track. The front brakeman misunderstood the instructions and thought the engine was to proceed through the crossover to the northward main track. While First 176 was moving in the vicinity of the crossover, he lined the south switch for entry to the crossover, then walked northward to be in position to line the north switch after First 176 had passed. He expected his engine to stop clear of the south switch of the crossover and did not observe that it had entered the crossover until the accident occurred. As engine 705 was moving northward from the industry track to the southward main track the enginemen were

looking to the south for signals from the conductor and the flagman, who were south of the engine. These employees did not see the front brakeman line the crossover switch when the engine was moving northward, and they were not aware of anything being wrong until the engine entered the crossover. Then the engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the engine struck First 176 before the brakes became effective. Under the rules, the switches of the crossover were required to be locked during the passage of a train on either main track, but neither switch of the crossover was locked at any time during the switching operations. The front brakeman said that it had not been the practice to lock crossover switches during similar switching operations, and said that if the switches in question had been locked he would have been reminded of the rule requiring these switches to be locked when a train is passing on either main track.

If the switches of the crossover at Pompano had been equipped with electric switch-locking, it would not have been possible to operate the switches to permit movement on the crossover when a train was moving on the northward main track in the vicinity of the crossover, as in this case, and the accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by a crossover switch being opened immediately in front of an approaching engine when a train was passing on adjoining track.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Florida East Coast Railway Company install electric switch-locking at main-track hand-operated switches in automatic block-signal territory.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventeenth day of April, 1944.

By the Commission, Chairman Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.

(SEAL)