

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2872  
FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT WEWAHOTEE, FLA., ON  
FEBRUARY 16, 1945

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SUMMARY

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Railroad: Florida East Coast  
Date: February 16, 1945  
Location: Wewahottee, Fla.  
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision  
Trains involved: Mixed : Freight  
Train numbers: Extra 313 North : Extra 310 North  
Engine numbers: 313 : 310  
Consist: 25 cars, 2 : 40 cars, caboose  
caboose  
Estimated speed: Standing : 35 m. p. h.  
Operation: Timetable and train orders  
Track: Single; tangent; level  
Weather: Foggy  
Time: 8:35 a. m.  
Casualties: 2 killed; 1 injured  
Cause: Failure to provide adequate  
protection for preceding train  
Recommendation: That the Florida East Coast  
Railway Company provide an  
adequate block system on the  
line on which this accident  
occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2872

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

FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

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April 7, 1945.

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Accident at Wewahottee, Fla., on February 16, 1945, caused  
by failure to provide adequate protection for the  
preceding train.

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

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 16, 1945, there was a rear-end collision between a mixed train and a freight train on the line of the Florida East Coast Railway at Wewahottee, Fla., which resulted in the death of two employees and the injury of one 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.

↑  
To Edgewater Jct.

○	Edgewater Jct., Fla.
	50.3 mi.
X	Wewahottee
	(P. of A.)
	19.6 mi.
○	Holopaw
	18.9 mi.
○	Kenansville
	105.2 mi.
○	Lake Harbor, Fla.

Wewahottee

587 ft.

---Point of accident

↑  
Direction of trains

Tangent  
5.4 mi.

←  
To Lake Harbor

P.T.

Inv. No. 2872  
Florida East Coast Railway  
Wewahottee, Fla.  
February 16, 1945

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad designated as the Okeechobee Branch and extending northward from Lake Harbor to Edgewater Junction, Fla., 194 miles. This was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders. There was no block system in use. The accident occurred on the main track at Wewahatchee, 143.7 miles north of Lake Harbor, at a point 587 feet south of the station. The main track was tangent throughout a distance of 5.4 miles south of this point and a considerable distance northward. The grade was practically level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

11. Except in automatic block territory, a fusee on or near the track, burning red, must not be passed until burned out.

\* \* \*

15. The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to reduce speed and lookout 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.

Night signals-A red light,  
A white light,  
Torpedoes and  
Fusees.

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

When day signals cannot be plainly seen, owing to weather or other conditions, night signals must also be used.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for the preceding train was 25 miles per hour and for the following train, 35 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

Extra 313 North, a north-bound mixed train, consisting of engine 313, 23 freight cars, 1 caboose, 1 mail car, 1 express car and 1 caboose, in the order named, passed Holopaw, 19.6 miles south of Wewahottee, at 7:55 a. m., and at 8:30 a. m., stopped on the main track at Wewahottee to pick up cars. The rear end was 587 feet south of the station. About 5 minutes later the rear end was struck by Extra 310 North.

Extra 310 North a north-bound freight train, consisting of engine 310, 40 cars and a caboose, passed Holopaw at 8:05 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour it struck Extra 313 North.

The cabooses, the mail car, the express car and one freight car of Extra 313, and the engine and four cars of Extra 310 were derailed and damaged.

It was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred at 8:35 a. m.

The engineer and the fireman of Extra 310 were killed. The front brakeman of Extra 310 was injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 8.5 trains.

#### Discussion

As Extra 310 North was approaching Wewahottee the conductor, the flagman and the front brakeman were in the caboose. These employees said that soon after their train departed from Kenansville, 38.5 miles south of Wewahottee, a speed of about 35 miles per hour was attained. This speed was maintained, except through yard-limit territory in the vicinity of Holopaw, until

immediately prior to the collision, when the brakes were applied in emergency. No train order restricting the authority of Extra 310 to proceed at the maximum authorized speed had been issued, and no warning signal was seen or heard by the surviving members of the crew prior to the accident. In this vicinity fog restricted visibility to a distance of about 800 feet. Immediately after the accident occurred the conductor and the flagman alighted from the rear platform of the caboose and proceeded to the front of their train. These employees and their front brakeman did not see any member of the crew of the preceding train either to the rear of Extra 310 or at any point between their caboose and engine.

The conductor of Extra 313 North said that he dropped a lighted 10-minute fusee from the rear of the train about 3,000 feet south of the point where the accident occurred. The flagman said that just before his train stopped he alighted, ran southward, carried two lighted fusees, and, at a point about 1,300 feet south of the rear end of his train, placed two torpedoes on the east rail; then he continued southward a distance of about 800 feet and was giving stop signals with the lighted fusees when the engine of Extra 310 passed him.

In this territory trains were being operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use on this line the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block, and this accident would not have occurred.

#### Cause

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

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Florida East Coast Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of April, 1945.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,  
Secretary.