

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2680
THE LOUISIANA & ARKANSAS RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
AT PULLION, LA., ON
FEBRUARY 22, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad: Louisiana & Arkansas
Date: February 22, 1943
Location: Bullion, La.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Passenger : Freight
Train numbers: 5 : Extra 800 North
Engine numbers: 394 : 800
Consist: 4 cars : 155 cars, 1 engine
in tow and 2
caboose
Speed: 18-20 m. p. h. : Standing
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 0.32 percent
ascending grade southward
Weather: Clear
Time: 12:46 a. m.
Casualties: 27 injured
Cause: Accident caused by an inferior
train occupying main track on
the time of an opposing superior
train and then by failure to
provide adequate flag protection
Recommendation: That the Louisiana & Arkansas Railway
Company install an adequate block
system on the line on which this
accident occurred

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2680

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

THE LOUISIANA & ARKANSAS RAILWAY COMPANY

April 10, 1943.

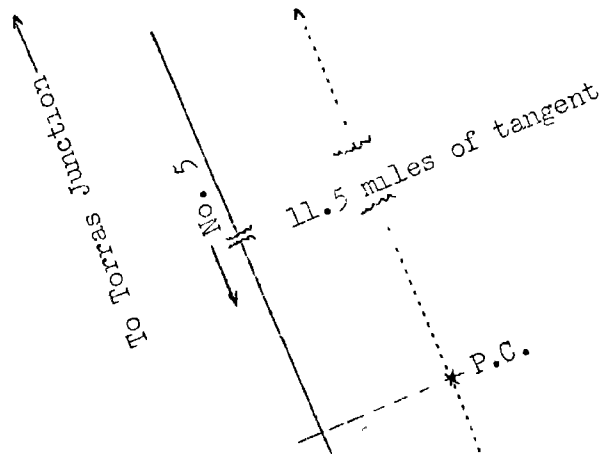
Accident at Bullion, La., on February 22, 1943, caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train and then by failure to provide adequate flag protection.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 22, 1943, there was a head-end collision between a passenger train and a freight train on the Louisiana & Arkansas Railway at Bullion, La., which resulted in the injury of 21 passengers, 2 dining-car employees, 3 train-service employees on duty and 1 train-service employee off duty.

¹Under 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.



- | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------|
| o | Torras Junction, La. | 48.68 mi. |
| o | Lobdell Junction | 8.42 mi. |
| o | Baton Rouge | 13.43 mi. |
| X | Bullion (P. of A.) | 7.93 mi. |
| o | Gonzales | 18.07 mi. |
| o | Gramercy | 39.53 mi. |
| o | New Orleans, La. | |

2°
912 ft.

P.T.

1,983 ft.

Point of accident

3,163 ft.

Bullion

459 ft.

North siding-switch

50-car capacity siding 2,616 ft.

Extra 800 North

5.5 miles of tangent

To New Orleans

Inv-2680
 Louisiana & Arkansas Railway
 Bullion, La.
 February 22, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad designated as the New Orleans District and extending between Lobdell Junction and New Orleans, La., a distance of 87.38 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a single-track line over which trains are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Bullion a siding 2,616 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The north switch of this siding is 459 feet south of the station. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 3,163 feet north of the north siding-switch. Approaching from the north there are, in succession, a tangent 11.5 miles in length, a 2° curve to the right 912 feet, and a tangent 1,983 feet to the point of accident. Approaching from the south there is a tangent 5.5 miles to the point of collision. At this point the grade is 0.32 percent ascending southward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine and Motor Whistle Signals.

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

<u>SOUND</u>	<u>INDICATION</u>
* * *	
(c) ___ o o o	Flagman protect rear of train.
(c-a) o o o ___	Forward trainman or fireman protect ahead.

* * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

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

73. Extra trains are inferior to regular trains.

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

87. An inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains and failing to clear the main track by the time required by rule must be protected as prescribed by Rule 99.

Extra trains must clear the time of opposing regular trains not less than five minutes unless otherwise provided, * * *.

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. When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

* * *

The front of the train must be protected in the same way when necessary by the forward trainman or fireman.

* * *

In the vicinity of the point of accident, the maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 30 miles per hour, and for freight trains, 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 5, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 394, one baggage car, one coach, one chair car and one dining car, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction except the second car, which was of steel-underframe construction. At Torras Junction, 70.53 miles north of Bullion, the crew received copies of train orders Nos. 101 and 116, Form 13, reading in part as follows:

No. 101.

* * *. No. 5 Eng 394 run 1 hour
40 mins late Lobdell Jct to New Orleans.

No. 116.

No. 2 Eng 24 wait at Bullion until
1250AM for No. 5 Eng 394.

No. 5 departed from Lobdell Junction at 12:02 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 42 minutes late, departed from Baton Rouge, 13.45 miles north of Bullion and the last open office, at 12:30 a. m., 1 hour 40 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 18 to 20 miles per hour it collided with Extra 800 North. The brakes of this train had functioned properly at all points where used en route.

Extra 800 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of engine 800, 2 auxiliary water cars, 132 cars, 1 engine in tow, 1 auxiliary water car and 2 cabooses, in the order named. At New Orleans, 65.53 miles south of Bullion, the crew received copies of train order No. 101, Form 19, previously quoted. This train departed from West Yard, New Orleans, 61.6 miles south of Bullion, at 7:35 p. m., February 21, according to the statement of the conductor, and stopped on the main track at Bullion about 12:28 a. m., February 22, with the engine standing at a point 3,163 feet north of the north siding-switch. About 18 minutes later Extra 800 was struck by No. 5.

From the right side of the cab of a south-bound engine the view of the point where the accident occurred is restricted to a distance of 2,578 feet, because of vegetation on the west side of the track and track curvature.

Engine 394 of No. 5 stopped with its front end resting on the pilot beam of engine 800, and the driving wheels were raised about 6 inches above the rails. The front-end frame was broken. The cistern was torn loose from the frame of the tender. The first car was slightly damaged. The front end of engine 800 was considerably damaged. The sixth and tenth cars of Extra 800 were slightly damaged.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:43 a. m.

The train-service employees injured were the conductor, the engineer and the baggageman of No. 5, and a brakeman who was deadheading on No. 5.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 10.5 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that extra trains are inferior to regular trains. Inferior trains must be clear at the time a first-class train in the same direction is due to leave the last station in the rear where time is shown and must be clear of the main track 5 minutes before an opposing regular train is due to leave the station at which the trains meet, unless a train order modifying these requirements is issued. If an inferior train fails to clear the time of either a following or an opposing superior train, flag protection must be provided.

No. 2, a north-bound first-class schedule, was due to leave Gonzales, 7.93 miles south of Bullion and the last station where time was shown, at 12:30 a. m., and Bullion at 12:40 a. m. No. 5, a south-bound first-class schedule, was directed by train order to run 1 hour 40 minutes late from Lobdell Junction to New Orleans, and therefore was due to leave Essen, 8.14 miles north of Bullion, at 12:37 a. m., and Bullion at 12:48 a. m. If Extra 800 North proceeded to Bullion it was required to be into clear for No. 2 not later than 12:30 a. m. and for No. 5 not later than 12:43 a. m., or provide flag protection. If Extra 800 proceeded north of Bullion it was required to clear No. 5 at Essen not later than 12:32 a. m.

Extra 800 North, consisting of engine 800, 135 cars, 1 engine in tow and 2 cabooses, proceeded to Bullion ahead of No. 2. The capacity of the siding at Bullion is 50 cars. Extra 800 North stopped on the main track at Bullion about 12:28 a. m., with its rear end clear of the fouling point of the south siding-switch and its engine standing 3,163 feet north of the north siding-switch. About 18 minutes later the front end of this train was struck by No. 5. Because No. 5 was inferior by direction, it was required to enter the siding at Bullion to clear No. 2, and No. 2 was directed by train order to wait at Bullion until 12:50 a. m. for No. 5. No train order concerning Extra 800 had been issued to No. 5.

No. 5 passed Essen at 12:37 a. m. and as it was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 55 miles per hour, the headlight was lighted, the throttle was open and both enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead. When the engine was about 2,900 feet north of the point of accident, the engineer made a 10-pound brake-pipe reduction and partially closed the throttle, and the speed was reduced to about 45 miles per hour. Soon afterward he saw the lighted headlight of Extra 800 and thought No. 2 was standing at Bullion. When No. 5 was about 1,900 feet north of the engine of Extra 800 he made a

service application to reduce speed for entering the siding and, when the distance was only about 800 feet between the trains, he saw a fusee become ignited. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position and opened the sander valve, but the distance was not sufficient for No. 5 to stop short of Extra 800. The speed was about 18 miles per hour when the engineer jumped about 100 feet north of the point of collision. Both engineers said that the fusee was displayed about 150 feet north of the engine of Extra 800 and no torpedo was exploded. The brakes of No. 5 had been tested and had functioned properly at all points where used en route.

The engineer of Extra 800 said that, because the siding at Bullion would not contain his train and because his train could not proceed farther and clear the time of No. 2, he stopped his train with the rear end just clear of the south siding-switch so that No. 2 could enter the siding. It was then intended that Extra 800 would back clear of the north siding-switch, and No. 2 could proceed. Under the rules, rear-end flag protection against No. 2 was required after 12:30 a. m., and front-end flag protection against No. 5 after 12:32 a. m. The engineer of Extra 800 said that before his train stopped he sounded the engine-whistle signals for both front-end and rear-end flag protection and assumed that the front brakeman was providing protection against No. 5. The front brakeman said that when the engine passed a point about 3,000 feet south of the point of collision, he alighted on the left side and then crossed over the cars to the right side in order to transmit lantern signals. He had not been instructed by the engineer to provide flag protection, and understood that during the brakeman's absence the fireman was required to furnish protection. The engineer said that he never orally instructs front brakemen to flag but depends upon whistle signals for their instruction; however, the fireman and the conductor said that the whistle signal for rear-end protection was sounded but not for front-end protection. The engineer said that he did not know the front brakeman was not protecting until just before No. 5 was due at Bullion, when the fireman informed him that flag protection was not being provided, but the fireman said that about 12:30 a. m. he told the engineer front-end protection was not being furnished; therefore, he prepared to proceed to flag, but the engineer told him to remain on the engine to maintain steam so that Extra 800 could back immediately after No. 2 entered the siding, and that No. 2 would meet No. 5 at Essen. About 12:44 a. m. the fireman proceeded with a lighted flashlight toward the front of the engine, and the engineer followed him with a fusee, which he gave to the fireman. The fireman lighted the fusee when he was about 50 feet in front of his engine and he had proceeded about 100 feet farther when No. 5 passed him.

The conductor was stationed at the rear of the train and did not know that front-end flag protection was not being provided. If adequate front-end protection had been provided for Extra 800, this accident would have been prevented.

On the line on which this accident occurred, trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, No. 5 would have received warning that the main track north of the north siding-switch was occupied, and the accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train and then by failure to provide adequate flag protection.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Louisiana & Arkansas Railway Company install an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this tenth day of April, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.