

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3627  
LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT ARTEMUS, KY., ON  
APRIL 23, 1955

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**SUMMARY**

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Date: April 23, 1955

Railroad: Louisville and Nashville

Location: Artemus, Ky.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Freight train : Cut of cars

Train number: 44 :

Engine number: Diesel-electric :  
units 306, 238,  
117, and 301

Consists: 95 cars, caboose : 90 cars

Estimated speeds: 20-25 m. p. h. : Standing

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Tracks: Double; tangent; 0.02 percent  
ascending grade northward

Weather: Clear

Time: 2:50 p. m.

Casualties: 7 injured

Cause: Malicious tampering with switch

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3627

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

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

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June 9, 1955

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Accident at Artemus, Ky., on April 23, 1955, caused by  
malicious tampering with a switch.

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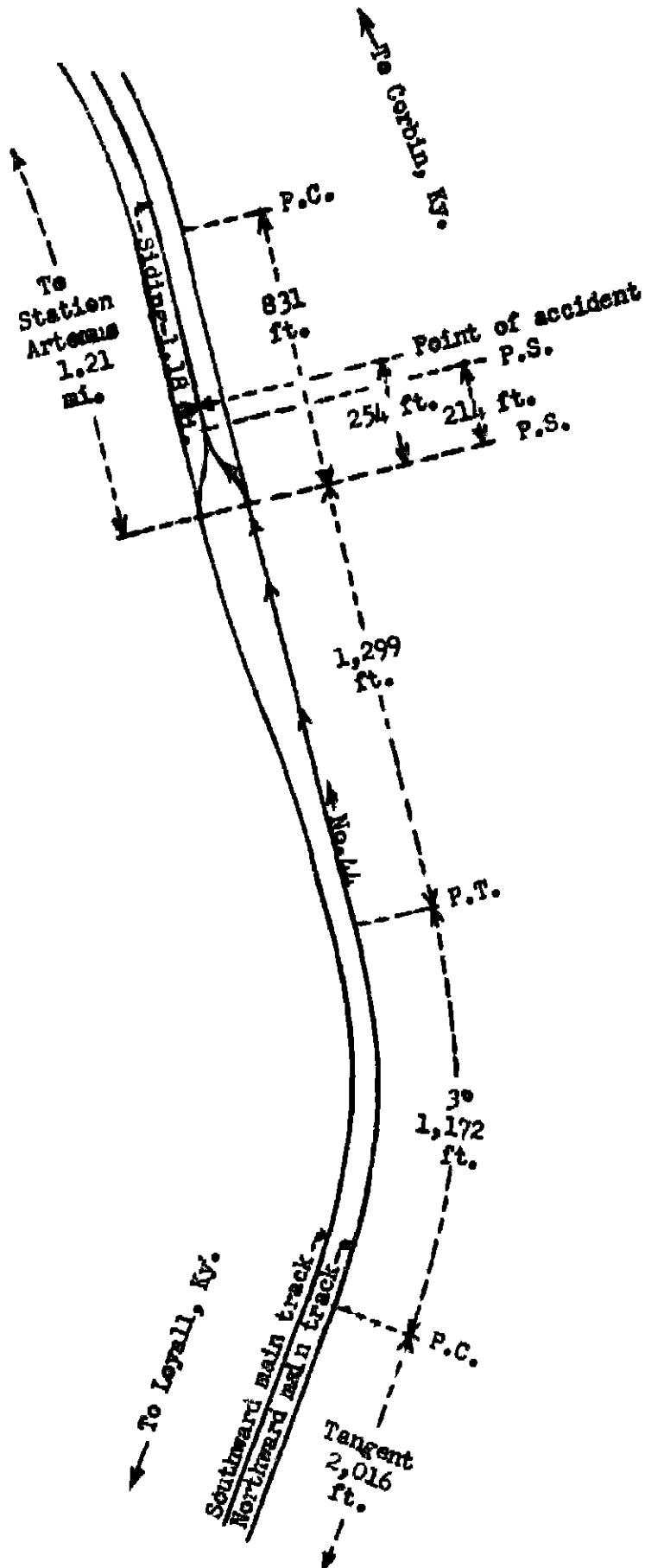
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION <sup>1</sup>

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On April 23, 1955, there was a collision between a freight train and a cut of cars on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad at Artemus, Ky., which resulted in the injury of five train-service employees and two railroad police officers.

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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 Clarke for consideration and disposition.



•	Corbin, Ky.	19.59 mi.
×	Artemus (Point of accident)	10.28 mi.
•	Walsend	37.61 mi.
•	Loyall, Ky.	

Report No. 3627  
 Louisville and Nashville Railroad  
 Artemus, Ky.  
 April 23, 1955

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Cumberland Valley Division extending between Loyall and Corbin, Ky., 67.48 miles, a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable and train orders. There is no block system in use. At Artemus, 47.89 miles north of Loyall, a siding 1.18 miles in length is located between the two main tracks. A facing-point crossover 214 feet in length connects the northward main track with the south end of the siding. The south switch of this crossover is located in the northward main track 1.21 miles south of the station. The accident occurred on the siding at a point 254 feet north of the south crossover-switch. From the south on the northward main track there are, in succession, a tangent 2,016 feet in length, a 3° curve to the left 1,172 feet, and a tangent 1,299 feet to the south crossover-switch and 881 feet northward. The siding is tangent throughout a distance of 617 feet immediately north of the crossover. For a distance of more than 2,100 feet immediately south of the point of accident the grade for north-bound trains varies between 0.02 percent and 0.32 percent ascending, and it is 0.02 percent ascending at that point.

The switch stand at the south end of the crossover is of the intermediate-stand horizontal-throw type. It is located 9 feet 2-3/4 inches east of the center-line of the track. It is equipped with both red and green targets. When the switch is lined for entry to the siding a red target, pointed at the ends, 3 feet 1 inch in length and with a maximum height of 1 foot near the center is displayed at right angles to the track. When the switch is in position for movement on the northward main track an oblong green target with rounded ends, 3 feet 3 inches long and 1 foot high, is displayed in the direction of an approaching train. The centers of the targets are approximately 6 feet above the level of the tops of the rails. Reflector lenses are mounted above the targets. Keepers are provided on opposite sides of the switch stand. There is a hole in each keeper for the insertion of a switch lock. The throwing lever is slotted to fit over the keeper. A switch lock for securing the switch in normal position is provided.

In the vicinity of the point of accident the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 35 miles per hour.

#### Description of Accident

No. 44, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 306, 238, 117, and 301, coupled in multiple-unit control, 95 cars, and a caboose. This train departed from Loyall at 12:12 p. m., 31 minutes late, stopped at Wallsend, 10.28 miles south of Artemus about 1:50 p. m., and departed from that point at 2:33 p. m., 1 hour 10 minutes late. While it was moving at a speed variously estimated at from 20 to 25 miles per hour the front end of the train entered the siding at Artemus and collided with the south end of a cut of 90 cars stored on that track. The collision occurred at a point 254 feet north of the south crossover-switch.

The Diesel-electric units and the first 26 cars of No. 44 were derailed. The first Diesel-electric unit stopped approximately at right angles to the track with the front end against an embankment immediately east of the tracks and 246 feet north of the point of collision. The other Diesel-electric units stopped in diagonal positions across the rails of the siding and the adjacent tracks. The second and fourth units overturned to the right. The derailed cars stopped in various positions on or near the siding and the adjacent tracks. The six cars at the south end of the cut of cars on the siding were derailed and stopped in various positions on or near the track. The first Diesel-electric unit was badly damaged, and the other units were considerably damaged. Nineteen of the derailed cars of No. 44 and one of the derailed cars of the cut on the siding were destroyed. The other derailed cars were badly damaged. The main tracks and the siding were destroyed throughout a distance of 440 feet.

the conductor,

The engineer, the front brakeman, the flagman, and a student brakeman were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:50 p. m.

### Discussion

Because of a strike which was in progress on the line of this carrier, the crew which was operating No. 44 at the time of the accident was made up of employees who had been temporarily assigned to positions in train and engine service. The engineer was regularly employed as a roundhouse foreman, the fireman as a machinist helper, and the front brakeman as a shop laborer.

As No. 44 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen, the front brakeman, a student brakeman, and a sergeant of the railroad police force were in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The conductor, the flagman, and a sergeant of the railroad police were in the caboose. The brakes of this train had been tested by members of the crew before departure from Loyall and had functioned properly when used en route. Several minutes before the train reached Artemus the front brakeman entered the engine compartment of the first Diesel-electric unit. The engineer said that when the locomotive was approximately one-half mile south of the siding at Artemus he made a 5-pound brake-pipe reduction which reduced the speed from about 35 miles per hour to 32 or 33 miles per hour, as indicated by the speed-indicating device. Soon after the brake application was initiated the locomotive entered the tangent south of the siding, and the engineer observed a man walking toward the train on the northward track. This man left the track as the train approached and entered a waiting automobile on a highway which closely parallels the railroad on the east in this vicinity. The engineer observed that there were two other persons in the automobile. After he passed the automobile he turned to face the north and directed his attention to the track ahead. Several seconds later he observed that the south crossover-switch was lined for entry to the siding. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes, and he thought the speed was reduced to about 25 miles per hour before the collision occurred. The fireman said he observed that the south crossover-switch was open at about the time the engineer took action to stop the train. He said that the emergency application was made when the locomotive was approximately 200 to 250 feet south of the switch. The front brakeman said that he returned to the control compartment immediately before the locomotive

entered the turnout and he did not observe the position of the switch. The conductor said that the emergency application of the brakes reduced the speed to about 20 miles per hour before the collision occurred.

After the accident occurred the south crossover-switch was found to be lined for entry to the siding. This switch previously had been spiked in position for movement on the northward main track. Examination of the switch disclosed that the switch points were undamaged. Two spikes which had been driven into the head block tie to secure the switch point against the stock rail had been removed. One spike was found between the ties at the switch. Marks on the switch plate through which the spikes had been driven indicated that the spikes had been removed by use of a claw bar. The switch lock had been removed from the keeper and was found on the embankment about 20 feet east of the switch. A claw bar, which evidently had been used to pull the spikes, was found on the embankment east of the track at a point approximately 30 feet from the switch.

The facing-point switch involved had been spiked in normal position on April 2, 1955. It was last inspected by the track supervisor about 11 a. m. on the day before the accident occurred, and the track supervisor said he observed that the spikes which secured the switch points in normal position were in place and the switch lock was in place and locked at that time. At the time this investigation was concluded the person or persons who lined the switch for entry to the siding had not been apprehended.

Observations made by inspectors of this Commission after the accident occurred disclosed that the target of the switch involved had recently been painted. It was found that when the switch was lined for entry to the siding the indication of the target was clearly visible for a distance of 2,000 feet south of the switch.



Cause

This accident was caused by malicious tampering with a switch.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this ninth day of June, 1955.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAI)

HAROLD D. McCOY,  
Secretary.