INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2608

THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR CYPRESS, FLA., ON

JULY 29, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Louisville & Nashville	
Date:	July 29, 1942	
Location:	Cypress, Fla.	
Kind of accident:	Rear-end collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	Extra 1128 South	: Extra 177-298 South
Engine numbers:	1128	: 177-298
Consist:	34 cars, caboose	: 38 cars, caboose
Speed:	20 m. p. h.	: 35-40 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders	
Track:	Single; tangent; 1.49 percent ascending grade southward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	About 12:42 a. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 5 injured	
Cause:	Accident caused by failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train	
Recommendation:	That the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company establish an adequate block system on the line involved in this accident	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2608

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

THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

September 8, 1942.

Accident near Cypress, Fla., on July 29, 1942, caused by failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 29, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad near Cypress, Fla., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of five employees.

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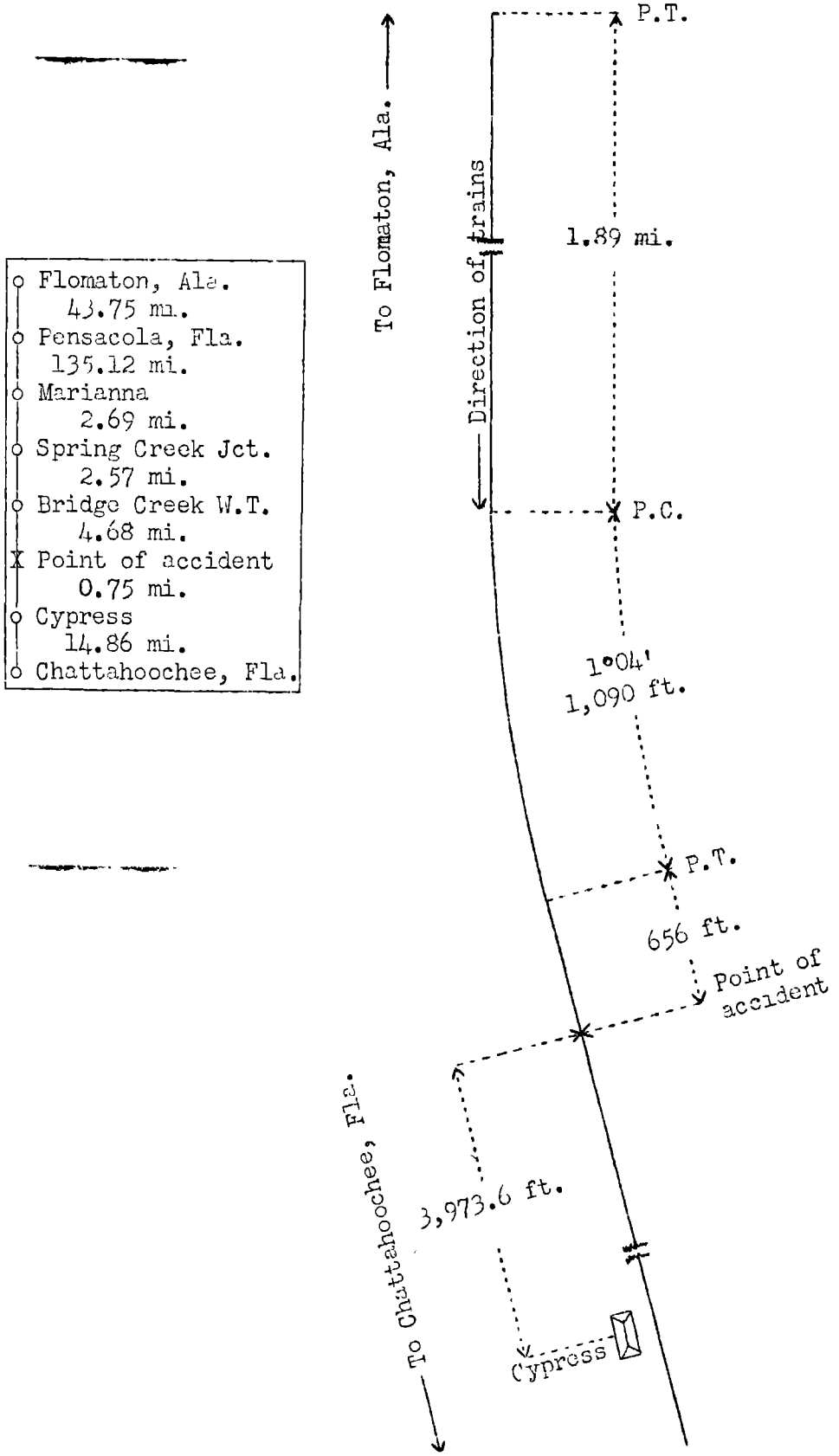
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 2608
Louisville & Nashville Railroad
Cypress, Fla.
July 29, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery, New Orleans and Pensacola Division which extends between Flomaton, Ala., and Chattahoochee, Fla., a distance of 204.42 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. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 3,973.6 feet north of the station at Cypress. As the point of accident is approached from the north there are, in succession, a tangent 1.89 miles in length, a 1°04' curve to the left 1,090 feet and a tangent 656 feet to the point of accident and a considerable distance beyond. The grade for south-bound trains is level a distance of 2,000 feet, then there is a vertical curve 700 feet, which is followed by a 1.49-percent ascending grade 94 feet to the point of accident and 506 feet beyond. At the point of accident the track is laid on a fill about 10 feet in height.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

* * *

Restricted Speed.-Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train to be reduced.

11. A train finding a fusee burning red on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee, and then proceed at restricted speed. When burning yellow, it is a Restricted-speed signal. * * *

19 (a). When cars are handled behind caboose, * * * a red light by night will be displayed on rear of last car, * * *.

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

* * *

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 not less than ten minutes apart, except in closing up at stations.

99 (d). 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, * * *, lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals.

161 (a). Engines must not be run backward to exceed a speed of 20 miles per hour.

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

Description of Accident

Extra 1128 South, a south-bound freight train, consisted of a caboose, engine 1128 headed north, 1 loaded car and 33 empty cars, in the order named. After the crew received copies of a running order, this train entered the main track at Spring Creek Junction, 8 miles north of Cypress, and departed from that point at 12:20 a. m., according to the statement of the conductor, stopped for water at Bridge Creek Water Tank, 5.43 miles north of Cypress, and about 3 minutes later departed from that point. While this train was moving at a speed of approximately 20 miles per hour the rear end was struck by Extra 177-298 South.

Extra 177-298 South, a south-bound freight train, consisted of engines 177 and 298, coupled, 38 loaded cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was made, this train departed from Pensacola, 145.81 miles north of Cypress, at 2:20 p. m., July 28, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, passed Marianna, 10.69 miles north of Cypress and the last open reporting office, at 12:30 a. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 to 40 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of Extra 1128 South.

The view from the left side of a south-bound engine of the point where the accident occurred is restricted to a distance of about 1,350 feet.

The rear car of Extra 1128 South was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, down the embankment west of the track. Engine 177 was derailed to the west and stopped, badly damaged, down the embankment on its left side, parallel to the track and in reverse direction. The cab was crushed. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped, upright and across the track opposite engine 177. The cistern was torn from the frame. Engine 298 was derailed to the west and stopped, considerably damaged, down the embankment and leaned against engine 177. The tender was torn loose from the engine and stopped across the track and at right angles to it, at the rear of engine 298. The

cistern was torn from the frame. The first six cars of Extra 177-298 were derailed and stopped at various angles to the track. Of these cars, four were destroyed. The front truck of the seventh car was derailed.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:42 a. m.

The employee killed was the engineer of the first engine of Extra 177-298 South. The employees injured were the fireman of the first engine, the engineer and the fireman of the second engine, and the front brakeman of Extra 177-298 South, and the front brakeman of Extra 1128 South.

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 16.6 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that 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. At night lighted fusees must be thrown off at proper intervals. A fusee burning red on the track or near it requires a train to stop, then it may proceed but must be prepared to stop short of a preceding train or an obstruction. When cars are hauled behind the caboose at night, a red light must be displayed on the rear car. All surviving members of both crews involved understood these requirements.

Extra 1128 South departed from Spring Creek Junction, 8 miles north of Cypress, at 12:20 a. m. This train consisted of a caboose, engine 1128, moving backward, and 34 cars, in the order named. The rear car was a gondola and a lighted red lantern was displayed on the rear end. At Bridge Creek Water Tank, 5.43 miles north of Cypress, a stop was made for water. As this train was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 20 miles per hour. The engineer observed the headlight of a following train moving rapidly and closely approaching the rear of his train. He opened the throttle fully in an attempt to equal the speed of the following train; however, before the speed was materially increased the rear end was struck by Extra 177-298 South at a point 3/4 mile north of the station at Cypress.

As Extra 177-298 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 40 miles per hour, both engines were using steam and the enginemen on both engines were

maintaining a lookout ahead. The fireman of the first engine said that as his engine moved on the curve to the left he observed at a distance of about 900 feet a lighted fusee displayed from the rear car of Extra 1128. He warned his engineer, who immediately closed the throttle, made a service brake-pipe reduction and then moved the brake valve to emergency position, but the distance was insufficient for Extra 177-298 to stop short of Extra 1128. The speed was not materially reduced when he jumped off just before the collision occurred. Since the engineer of engine 177, of Extra 177-298, was killed in the accident, it could not be determined when he first observed the preceding train. The fireman of the second engine said that his engine was moving on the curve to the left when he first observed the lighted fusee near the south end of the curve. The engineer of the second engine first became aware that a collision was imminent when the brakes were applied in emergency. None of the surviving members of the engine crews of Extra 177-298 saw any lighted red lantern displayed at the rear of Extra 1128. The brakes of Extra 177-298 had been tested and had functioned properly en route.

Because engine 1128 was moving in backward motion, the maximum authorized speed of Extra 1128 was 20 miles per hour in territory where the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour. Under this condition, Extra 1128 might be overtaken by another train. When this train departed from Spring Creek Junction the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose at the front of the train. The front brakeman was stationed in the rear car to fulfill the duties of flagman. He had in his possession two fusees, six torpedoes, a red lantern and a white lantern. At Spring Creek Junction he placed two torpedoes on the rail. Although the train stood at Bridge Creek about 4 minutes, he did not proceed to the rear more than 100 feet. Since he had placed two torpedoes north of Spring Creek Junction, and since the rules require a train to operate at restricted speed a distance of 1/2 mile after torpedoes are exploded, he thought the torpedoes would provide protection. Furthermore, because of tangent track, he was able to see to the rear a distance of 3 miles. He did not place torpedoes or leave a lighted fusee at Bridge Creek. When his train departed from the water tank there was no indication of a following train. When he first observed Extra 177-298 moving on the curve to the rear of his train, he lighted a red fusee and gave stop signals from the rear of the rear car, but the distance was not sufficient for the following train to stop short of his train. The brakeman said that he did not drop off the lighted fusee as he feared it would become extinguished. According to the statements of the surviving members of the crew of Extra 177-298 and the operator at Spring Creek Junction, after Extra 177-298 exploded the torpedoes at Spring Creek Junction it ran at restricted speed for a considerable distance before it resumed maximum authorized speed.

In the vicinity of the point of accident there is no restriction to prevent a following freight train from proceeding at the maximum authorized speed of 40 miles per hour. The rules require that necessary action must be taken to provide full protection when a train is moving under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train. Since the preceding train was restricted to one-half of the maximum authorized speed, it was required to provide rear-end protection. The only flag protection provided was a lighted fusee displayed from the rear car. The rules of this railroad provide for the use of yellow fusees as well as red fusees. If fusees of either kind had been dropped at proper intervals, Extra 177-298 would have been required to proceed prepared to stop short of a preceding train and this accident could have been averted.

On the line involved in this accident trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. Recently the Commission investigated four other accidents which occurred on the line of this carrier in territories on which trains were operated by timetable and train orders only. The first, which resulted in the death of 2 persons and the injury of 2 persons, was a rear-end collision between two freight trains near Agawam, Ky., on May 8, 1941. The second, which resulted in the death of 1 person and the injury of 11 persons, was a head-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train near Harold, Fla., on September 20, 1941. The third, which resulted in the death of 1 person and the injury of 75 persons, was a head-end collision between two passenger trains near St. Francis, Ky., on December 20, 1941. The fourth, which resulted in the injury of 3 persons, was a rear-end collision between two freight trains near Harold, Fla., on July 21, 1942. Two of these accidents occurred on the same Division on which the one at Cypress occurred. The reports of the Commission covering the investigation of these accidents recommended the establishment of an adequate block system on the lines involved. At the times the reports covering the investigations of the accidents which occurred on September 20, 1941, and December 20, 1941, were released, a rule to show cause why the carrier involved should not establish an adequate block-signal system was served on the carrier. Certain train-service employees of this carrier said that operation is safer if a block system is in use. In the present case, if an adequate block system had been in use on the line involved, the 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

That the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company should establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident. A rule to show cause was issued by the Commission on November 5, 1941, and was served on said carrier in connection with the accident which occurred on the same Division on September 20, 1941.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this eighth day of September, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.