

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2606
THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR HAROLD, FLA., ON
JULY 21, 1942

- 2 -

SUMMARY

Railroad: Louisville & Nashville

Date: July 21, 1942

Location: Harold, Fla.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight

Train numbers: First 12 : Second 12

Engine numbers: 197 : 181

Consist: 36 cars, cabooses : 10 cars, cabooses

Speed: Standing : 25 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; level

Weather: Clear

Time: About 3:54 a. m.

Casualties: 3 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure to provide 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. 2606

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

THE LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

August 27, 1942.

Accident near Harold, Fla., on July 21, 1942, caused by
failure to provide protection for preceding train.

1
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On July 21, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad near Harold, Fla., which resulted in the injury of three employees.

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.

To Flomaton

Point of accident

- o Flomaton, Ala. 63.23 mi.
- o Wilton, Fla 6.03 mi.
- X Point of accident 4.07 mi.
- o Harold 11.23 mi.
- o Galliver 9.30 mi.
- o Crestview 40.37 mi.
- o Ponce De Leon 70.19 mi.
- o Chattahoochee, Fla.

4.07 miles to Harold

Direction of trains

3.03 mi.

*T.T.

4,639 ft.

*P.C.

7,727 ft. tangent

To Chattahoochee

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery, New Orleans and Pensacola Division which extends between Chattanooga, Fla., and Flomaton, Ala., 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 at a point 4.07 miles north of the station at Harold. As the point of accident is approached from the south the track is tangent a distance of 3.03 miles to the point of accident and 4.4 miles beyond. The grade for north-bound trains is 0.32 percent descending a distance of 2,195 feet and then is level 94.5 feet to the point of accident.

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. * * *

* * *

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

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

* * *

(c) ___ o o o Flagman protect rear of train.

* * *

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. 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. At a point one-fourth of a mile from the rear of his train, he will place one torpedo on the rail; continuing back to a distance of not less than one-half mile from the rear of his train, he will place two torpedoes on the rail one rail length apart. * * *

* * *

99 (b). Should a train be seen or heard approaching before flagman has reached the required distance, he must at once place one torpedo on the rail, and by night * * *, he will, in addition, display a lighted red fusee, continuing in the direction of the approaching train as rapidly as possible.

* * *

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.

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

Description of Accident

First 12, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 187, 5 loaded and 31 empty cars and a caboose. After a terminal air-brake test was made, this train departed from Chattahoochee, 131.09 miles south of Harold, at 5:15 p. m., July 20, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 25 minutes late, and, because of an overheated tender journal, it stopped at Ponce De Leon, 60.90 miles south of Harold to re-brass the journal. This train departed from Ponce De Leon at 11 p. m., according to the statement of the conductor, 4 hours 20 minutes late, and, at Crestview, 20.53 miles south of Harold and the last open office, the overheated journal was again re-brassed. First 12 departed from Crestview at 1:30 a. m., 5 hours late, stopped at Galliver, 11.23 miles south of Harold, to attend to the overheated journal and departed

at 3:20 a. m., 6 hours 30 minutes late. Because of the overheated journal it again stopped with the rear end standing at a point 4.07 miles north of Harold. Soon afterward the rear end of this train was struck by Second 12.

Second 12, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 181, 7 loaded and 3 empty cars and a caboose. At Chattanooga a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly en route. This train departed from Chattanooga at 5:35 p. m., July 20, according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 1 hour 45 minutes late, and stopped at Galliver behind First 12. Second 12 departed from Galliver at 3:30 a. m., according to statements of the crew, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of First 12. There was no condition of engine 181 that obscured the vision or distracted the attention of the employees on the engine.

The caboose of First 12 and the rear car were derailed and demolished. The second car ahead of the caboose was derailed to the east and was slightly damaged. The rear truck of the third car ahead of the caboose was derailed. Engine 181 was derailed to the west and stopped, considerably damaged, with the front end off the roadbed at a point 141 feet north of the point of accident, and leaned to the left at an angle of about 30 degrees. The tender was derailed and stopped upright and in line with the engine. The front truck of the first car was derailed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 3:54 a. m.

The employees injured were the engineer, the fireman and the front brakemen of Second 12.

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

sufficient distance to insure full protection. All members of both crews involved understood these requirements.

As First 12 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was gradually reduced to about 15 miles per hour throughout a distance of 3 or 4 miles because of an overheated journal on the rear truck of the tender. The engineer sounded the engine-whistle signal for the flagman to protect the rear of the train, then made a service brake-pipe reduction and stopped in a distance of about 400 feet. The train stopped about 3:51 a. m. with the rear end standing 4.07 miles north of Harold. About 3 minutes later the rear end of this train was struck by Second 12.

As Second 12 was approaching Harold the speed was about 35 miles per hour, the headlight was lighted and the members of the crew on the engine were maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer said that when his train was about 1-1/2 miles south of Harold he observed the markers of First 12 at a distance of about 3 miles and closed the throttle to drifting position. The next time he saw the rear end of First 12, his engine was about 1,000 feet south of the point where the accident occurred, and the speed was about 35 miles per hour. He placed the brake valve in emergency position, but the distance was not sufficient for this train to stop short of the standing train. The speed was about 25 miles per hour at the time of the collision. The track was tangent over three miles to the rear of First 12; however, the engineer of Second 12 said that the rear end of First 12 was standing in a dip in the track and this prevented him from observing the rear end of First 12 a greater distance. Between Galliver and the point of accident, no torpedo was exploded nor was any lighted fusee displayed. The engineer of Second 12 said that he did not observe lighted marker lamps nor any flagging signal given by the crew of First 12; however, the front brakeman of Second 12 said that the conductor of First 12 gave stop signals with a lighted white lantern, and the marker lamps were lighted. Because he was engaged in tending the fire, the fireman of Second 12 did not observe the rear end of First 12 until after the brakes were applied in emergency.

First 12 was moving at less than maximum authorized speed throughout a distance of 4 miles south of the point of accident, and, under the rules, it was required to provide protection against following trains. After this train stopped, the flagman was required to proceed immediately to the rear to provide flag protection. The conductor said that as his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the flagman and he were in the cupola and the speed was about 25 or 35 miles per hour. At intervals the conductor observed the headlight of Second 12, but was not alarmed that Second 12 was closing up on

his train. He did not instruct the flagman to drop a lighted fusee as he considered his train to be moving at normal speed. Although his train had been delayed at several stations en route because of an overheated journal, he did not expect this journal to give further difficulty. After the brakes became applied the flagman and he proceeded to the rear platform to flag Second 12. Before the flagman could light a fusee the conductor gave stop signals from the rear platform with a white lantern, but Second 12 was too close to stop short of the caboose and the collision occurred immediately after First 12 stopped. However, the members of the crew on the engine of First 12 thought their train had been standing not less than 3 minutes before the collision occurred.

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 flag protection be provided a sufficient distance for following trains to be stopped from their maximum authorized speeds short of a preceding train. The rules of this railroad provide for the use of yellow fusees as well as red fusees. During the time that First 12 was moving at less than its normal speed, if fusees of either kind had been dropped at intervals, Second 12 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 three 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 on September 20, 1941 near Harold, Fla., on the same Division and occurred within a few miles of the accident here under discussion. 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 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 latter two investigations were released, a rule to show cause why the carrier involved should not establish an adequate block-signal system was served on the carrier. 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 flag 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 in the same locality on September 20, 1941.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of August, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.