INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3024

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR MORTON, KY., ON

SEPTEMBER 18, 1946

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Louisville and Nashville	
Date:	September 18, 1946	
Location:	Morton, Ky.	
Kind of accident:	Head-end collision	
Equipment involved:	Track motor-car and trailer	:Freight train
Train number:		: Extra 1532 North
Engine number:		: 1532
Consists:	Motor-car 1036, trailer	: 1 car, caboose
Estimated speeds:	10 m.p.h.	: 20 m.p.h.
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system	
Track:	Single; 2° curve; 0.4 percent ascending grade northward	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	9:10 p. m.	
Casualties:	5 killed	
Cause:	Failure to provide adequate protection for movement of track motor-car	
Recommendation:	That the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company provide adequate block-signal or train-order protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3024

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

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

October 23, 1946

Accident near Morton, Ky., on September 18, 1946, caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On September 18, 1946, there was a head-end collision between a track motor-car and a freight train on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad near Morton, Ky., which resulted in the death of five employees.

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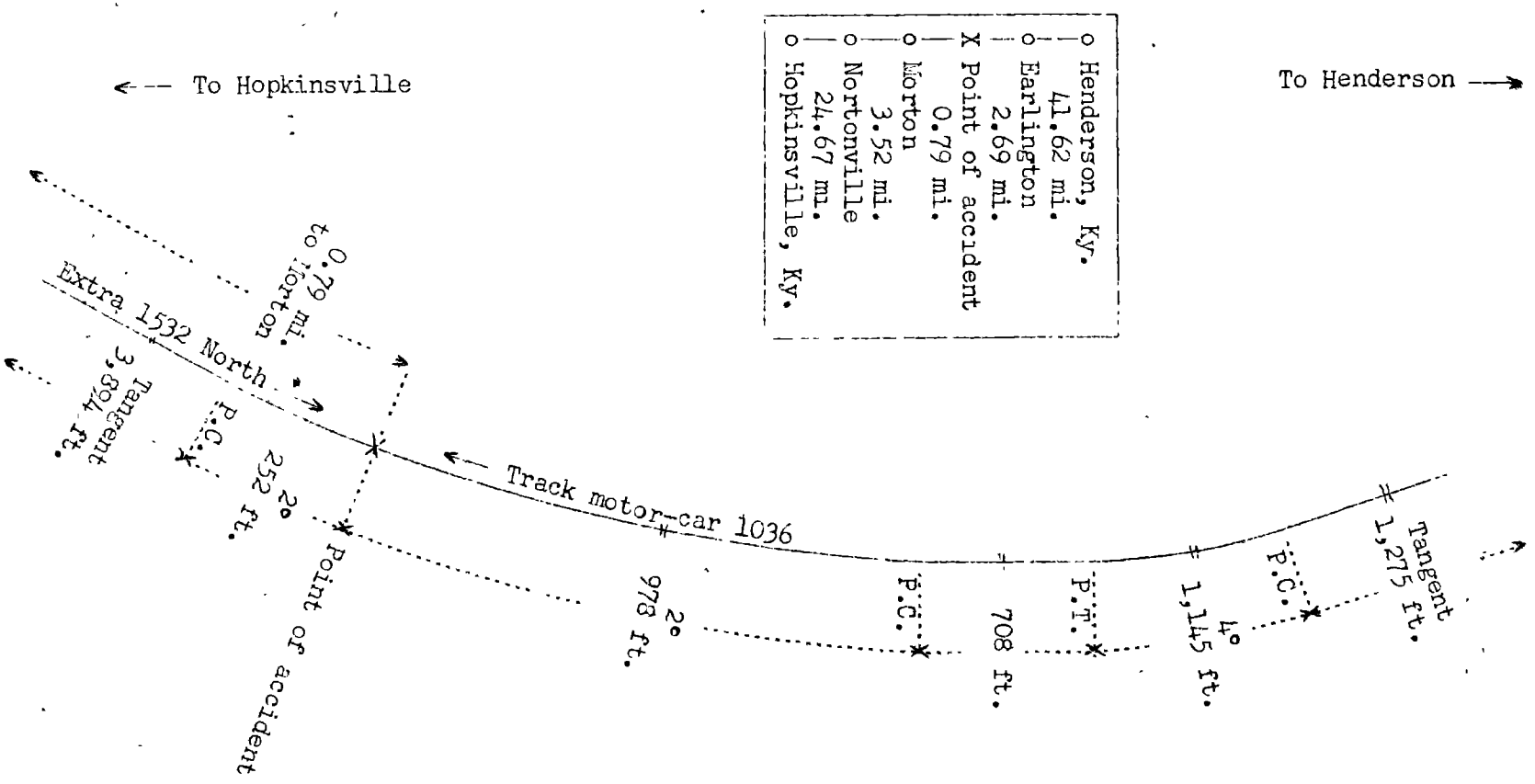
[1] Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 3024
Louisville and Nashville Railroad
Morton, Ky.
September 18, 1946

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Evansville Division extending between Henderson and Hopkinsville, Ky., 73.29 miles, a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The accident occurred on the main track 44.31 miles south of Henderson and 0.79 mile north of the station at Morton. From the north there are, in succession, a tangent 1,275 feet in length, a 4° curve to the right 1,145 feet, a tangent 708 feet and a 2° curve to the right 978 feet to the point of accident and 252 feet southward. From the south there is a tangent 3,894 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.4 percent ascending northward.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

> 24. When cars are pushed by an engine, except when shifting or making up trains in yards, a white light must be displayed on the front of the leading car by night.
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> 103. When cars are pushed by an engine, except when shifting or making up trains in yards, a trainman must take a conspicuous position on the front of the leading car, * * *
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> * * *
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> 161 (a). Engines must not be run backward to exceed a speed of 20 miles per hour.

Rules governing the movement of track motor-cars read in part as follows:

> 25. Before starting, driver must assign seat location to every person riding on car and have thorough understanding as to what part each person is to take in removing the car from track. Men on front of car shall assist driver in keeping lookout and warn of any apparent danger affecting safe operation of car. Men riding rear of car shall keep constant lookout in that direction for trains or cars.
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> * * *

27. * * * The person in charge of the operation of the car must, when practicable, procure information as to movements of trains. Dispatcher or operator will make memorandum of information given foreman or others in charge of car and have such person repeat the information given. Before trip is started, employe in charge of car shall read lineup on which movement is being made to other men on car. In addition to complying with these rules all other possible precautions must be taken to prevent collisions. * * *

37. Operate car at all times prepared to stop in less than one-half (1/2) range of vision. Use proper protection in operating around curves. * * *

44. When an emergency demands the use of a car after dark, or beyond the assigned limits of employe in charge of car, permission must be obtained from the train dispatcher before such movement is made and a speed of fifteen (15) miles per hour not exceeded; permission from the train dispatcher, however, does not relieve the employe in charge from taking all precautions required by the rules. * * *

126. Keeping Clear of Trains.--Track cars should be clear of the main track ten minutes before passenger trains are due. * * * Foremen must use the utmost care in running their cars over the road. Curves, tunnels, and other dangerous places should be flagged and a constant lookout should be kept.

* * *

132. Signal Appliances on Motor Cars.--Flags and torpedoes shall be kept on cars at all times, and in foggy weather or after dark, two white and two red lanterns shall be carried; each red lantern shall have three torpedoes attached.

Under no circumstances shall cars be operated after dark without displaying a white light in front and a red light in rear.

Description of Accident

About 8:55 p. m. track motor-car 1036 and a trailer, coupled, departed south-bound from Earlington, 3.48 miles north of Morton, and about 15 minutes later it was struck by Extra 1532 North at a point 0.79 mile north of Morton.

Extra 1532 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of a caboose, one car and engine 1532, headed south, in the order named. This train departed from Morton at 9:05 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 20 miles per hour it collided with track motor-car 1036.

Extra 1532 stopped with the front of the caboose standing 674 feet north of the point of collision. Motor-car 1036 was wedged underneath the front portion of the caboose, and was badly damaged. The trailer of the motor car, and the front end of the caboose of Extra 1532 were slightly damaged.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:10 p. m.

The employees killed were a section foreman and four laborers. These employees were occupants of the motor-car and trailer.

According to data furnished by the carrier, motor-car 1036 was of the 4-wheel type and weighed 1,250 pounds. It was powered by a 9-horsepower gasoline motor.

Discussion

The investigation disclosed that the section force at Earlington, 3.48 miles north of Morton, was instructed to proceed by track motor-car to Nortonville, 3.52 miles south of Morton, to assist other forces in making repairs to the track in the vicinity of Nortonville, where a derailment had occurred. About 8:40 p. m. the train dispatcher issued by telephone to the operator at Earlington information regarding train movements in this territory. The operator repeated the line-up to the train dispatcher, then placed the line-up on a table in the operator's office. This line-up included the information that engine 1532 was then in the yard at Morton but, because the train dispatcher had not been informed when engine 1532 would depart from Morton, no mention was made in the line-up regarding movement of this engine. About 8:50 p. m. the section foreman obtained the line-up, and about 5 minutes later the motor-car and trailer departed south-bound from Earlington. The motor-car was occupied by

the foreman and four laborers, and three laborers were on the trailer. The motor-car and trailer were moving on a 2° curve to the right when it was struck by Extra 1532 North. The foreman and one other occupant of the motor-car and the three occupants of the trailer were killed. The surviving members of the force said that, at the time the accident occurred, two lighted white lanterns were displayed at the front of the motor-car and one lighted white lantern and one lighted red lantern were displayed at the rear of the trailer. As the motor-car was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 10 miles per hour. Because of an embankment on the inside of the curve the view had by the occupants of the motor-car and trailer was materially restricted. They first saw the reflection of a lighted red fusee, which was displayed at the front end of the caboose of the approaching train, just before the collision occurred.

Extra 1532 North departed from Morton at 9:05 p. m. This train consisted of a caboose, one car and engine 1532, in backward motion, in the order named. No train order restricting the movement of Extra 1532 North with respect to motor-car 1036 had been issued, and the crew of this train was not informed that the motor-car was moving in this territory. As Extra 1532 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 20 miles per hour, which was the maximum authorized speed for this train. The flagman was on the front platform of the caboose, and a lighted white lantern and a lighted red fusee were displayed on the platform. The flagman first saw the lighted white lanterns displayed on the motor-car about 600 feet distant and he immediately opened the air valve on the rear platform of the caboose, but the collision occurred before the train could be stopped. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly.

The movements of track motor-cars are authorized orally by the train dispatcher, and a written line-up of the movement of trains within a limited territory is given to the operator of a track motor-car. Train crews are not given information about line-ups issued to motor-car operators. The rules governing the operation of track motor-cars provide that operators of motor-cars must maintain a lookout to the front and rear of moving motor-cars, and flag protection must be provided before a motor-car is permitted to move around curves where the view of the track is obscured. Motor-cars are insulated to prevent actuation of automatic-block signals. Since the operator of the motor-car involved was killed in the accident, it could not be determined why he permitted the motor-car to proceed without

flag protection in territory where the view of approaching trains was obstructed.

The investigation of this accident disclosed that twelve other collisions between trains and track motor-cars had occurred on the Evansville Division of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad since January 1, 1945, and six employees were injured in these accidents. In addition to the present accident, during the past two years the Commission has investigated eleven collisions between trains and track motor-cars. These accidents resulted in the death of 22 persons and the injury of 20, and were caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of track motor-cars. In the instant case, the members of the crew of Extra 1532 North were not informed by train order as to the location of the opposing track motor-car, and no protection was provided for the track motor-car. If adequate train-order protection had been provided for the movement of the track motor-car, this accident might have been prevented. If proper block protection had been provided, neither the track motor-car nor the opposing train would have been permitted to enter a block occupied by an opposing movement.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the movement of a track motor-car.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company provide adequate block-signal or train-order protection for the movement of track motor-cars on its line.

Dated at Washington, D. C. this twenty-third day of October, 1946.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.