

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3285
LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR OLIVE, FLA., ON
OCTOBER 7, 1949

SUMMARY

Date: October 7, 1949

Railroad: Louisville and Nashville

Location: Olive, Fla.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Passenger

Train numbers: 41 : 63

Engine numbers: 1589 : 261

Consists: 58 cars, cabooses : 7 cars

Estimated speeds: Standing : 35 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders

Track: Single; tangent; 0.5 percent descending grade southward

Weather: Foggy

Time: 6:05 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 15 injured

Cause: Failure to provide adequate protection for preceding train

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3285

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

LOUISVILLE AND NASHVILLE RAILROAD COMPANY

November 30, 1949

Accident near Olive, Fla., on October 7, 1949, caused by
failure to provide adequate protection for the
preceding train.

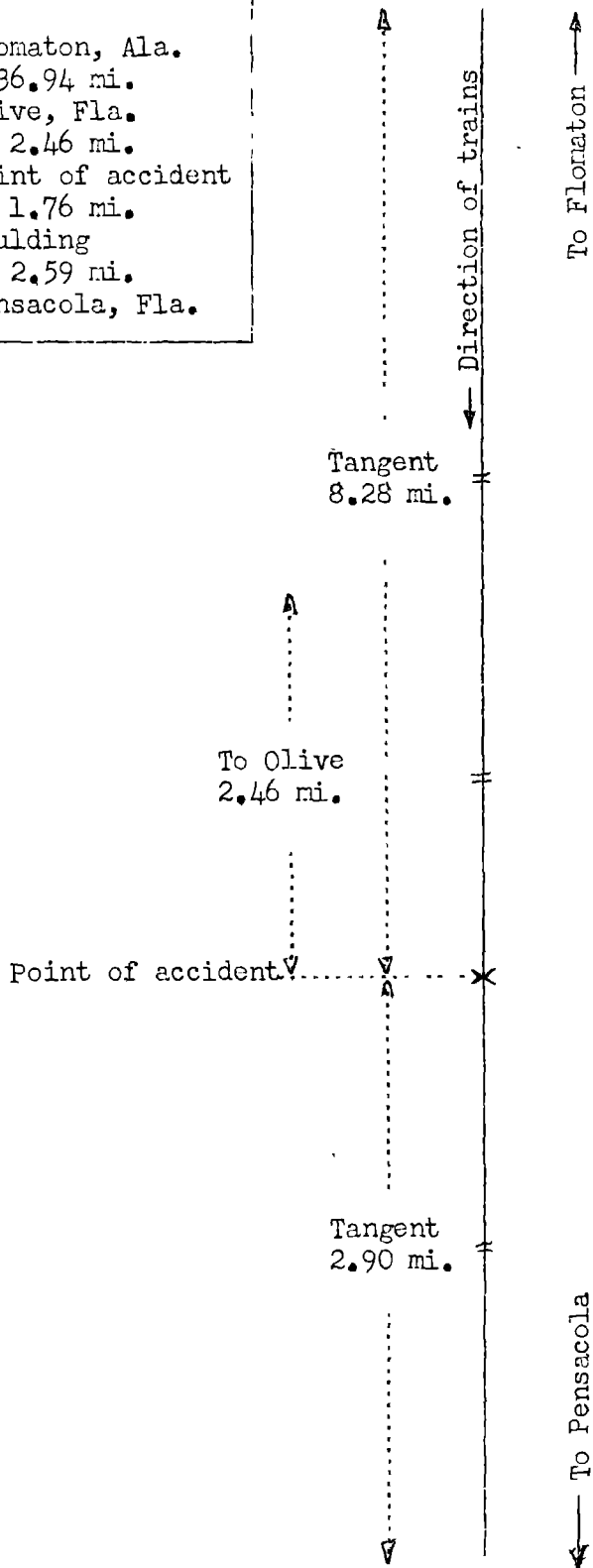
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 7, 1949, there was a rear-end collision between a freight train and a passenger train on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad near Clive, Fla., which resulted in the death of 1 person carried under contract, and the injury of 11 passengers, 1 train porter and 3 train-service employees. This accident was investigated in conjunction with a representative of the Florida Railroad and Public Utilities Commission.

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.

- o Flomaton, Ala.
- | 36.94 mi.
- o Olive, Fla.
- | 2.46 mi.
- X Point of accident
- | 1.76 mi.
- o Goulding
- | 2.59 mi.
- o Pensacola, Fla.



Report No. 3285
 Louisville and Nashville Railroad
 Olive, Fla.
 October 7, 1949

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Montgomery, New Orleans and Pensacola Division extending between Flomaton, Ala., and Pensacola, Fla., 43.75 miles, 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 39.40 miles south of Flomaton and 2.46 miles south of the station at Olive. From the north the track is tangent a distance of 3.28 miles to the point of accident and 2.90 miles southward. The grade at the point of accident is 0.5 percent descending southward.

This carrier's 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.

14. Engine Whistle Signals.

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

Sound	Indication
* * *	
(c) — o o o	Flagman protect rear of train.
* * *	

15. The explosion of one torpedo is a signal to stop; the explosion of two torpedoes, not more than 200 feet apart, is a signal to proceed at restricted speed. * * *

* * *

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. If on descending grade, or the view is obscured by curve, weather conditions, or in any other manner, he must go as much farther as may be necessary to reach a point where he is absolutely sure he can be seen by a train at a sufficient distance in which to stop.

When the two torpedoes have been placed at the proper distance, he may then return to the single torpedo, where he must remain until any approaching train has been stopped, * * *.

The maximum authorized speed for the passenger train was 55 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Flomaton, Ala., the last open office, the crew of No. 41, a south-bound second-class freight train, received copies of train order No. 307 reading as follows:

No 63 Eng 261 Run 15
Fifteen Mins Late Flomaton
to Pensacola

No. 41, consisting of engine 1589, 58 cars and a caboose, departed from Flomaton at 3:50 a. m., 6 hours 50 minutes late. About 5:05 a. m. this train was stopped on the main track, with the rear end 2.46 miles south of the station at Olive. About 1 hour later the rear end was struck by No. 63.

No. 63, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of engine 261, three baggage-express cars, one mail-baggage car, one baggage-express car, one passenger-baggage car and one coach, in the order named. All cars were of all-steel construction. At Flomaton, the crew of this train received copies of train order No. 314, reading as follows:

No 63 Eng 261 Run 20 Twenty
Mins Late Flomaton to
Pensacola

No. 63 departed from Flomaton at 4:55 a. m., 25 minutes late, passed Olive at 6:02 a. m., 27 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 35 miles per hour it struck the rear end of No. 41.

The caboose and the rear two cars of No. 41 were demolished. The third car ahead of the caboose was derailed and was considerably damaged. The engine of No. 63 mounted the wreckage of the demolished cars and stopped practically upright, with the front end against the north end of the third car from the caboose of No. 41. The engine was badly damaged. The front truck of the first car of No. 63 was derailed, and that car was somewhat damaged.

The engineer, the fireman and the conductor of No. 63 were injured.

There was a dense fog at the time of the accident, which occurred at 6:05 a. m.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 11.02 trains.

Discussion

No. 41 was moving on the main track south of Olive at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour when an undesired emergency brake application occurred. The engineer sounded the engine-whistle signal for the flagman to protect the rear of the train, and instructed the front brakeman, who was on the engine, to inspect the train. The conductor and the flagman were in the cupola of the caboose.

The conductor said that, when the train stopped, the flagman obtained flagging equipment and proceeded northward to provide flag protection. The conductor said that before the flagman departed he called his attention to the fog and instructed him to go back far enough to insure full protection. The conductor then proceeded to inspect the train. He found a broken journal on the south truck of the thirty-ninth car. This truck had become derailed at a rail-highway grade-crossing and the brake pipe on the car was broken. This break caused the brakes to become applied in emergency. The cars ahead of the derailed car then were detached, and moved southward a short distance, where the derailment was reported by telephone to the dispatcher. The dispatcher instructed the conductor to proceed immediately to Pensacola with the front portion of the train. The flagman said he heard the engine-whistle signal sounded to protect the rear of the train. He said he placed two torpedoes on the rail 35 feet apart about 2,875 feet north of his caboose, then walked southward and placed one torpedo 1,833 feet north of his caboose. He did not count the rails or use any other method in estimating the distances when he was going back to provide flag protection. However, some time after the accident occurred he counted the number of rails, which were 39 feet long, to the locations of the torpedoes, and computed the distances on that basis. Remains of freshly exploded torpedoes were found at points 2,439 feet and 1,220 feet north of the point of accident, but none were found at the locations established by the flagman. The flagman said that after he placed the last torpedo he walked about 150 feet farther south and waited at that point until he heard the engine whistle of No. 63 sounded for the station at Olive. He then lighted a red fusee. He said he first saw the headlight of No. 63 and then heard the explosions of the two torpedoes, which were answered by two short blasts on the engine whistle. He gave stop signals with the lighted red fusee until No. 63 passed him. He estimated that the speed of No. 63 was about 55 miles per hour when this train passed him. He thought the flag protection provided by him was adequate under all the conditions present.

As No. 63 approached the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 50 miles per hour. The headlight was lighted brightly but the view ahead was materially restricted by the dense fog. The enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their respective positions in the cab of the engine. The conductor was in the coach compartment at the rear of the sixth car, the baggageman was in the baggage compartment at the front end of the sixth car and the flagman was in the last car. The enginemen said they

heard the explosions of two torpedoes, then the engineer closed the throttle, placed the brake valve in service position and opened the sander valve. The engineer said that the speed of the train had been reduced to about 45 miles per hour when he heard the explosion of one torpedo and simultaneously saw the reflection of a red fusee. He then placed the brake valve in the emergency position. However, the speed of the train was only slightly reduced before the collision occurred. The brake valve remained in service position from the time the two torpedoes were exploded to the time it was placed in emergency position. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineer said the distance between the first two torpedoes and the last torpedo was too short to enable him to reduce to restricted speed by the time the last torpedo was exploded.

In this territory trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. The only provision for spacing following trains is by the time-interval method enforced by operators at open stations, and by flagman's signals. The rules require that a following train must be spaced at least 10 minutes behind a preceding train. In this case the preceding train departed from Flomaton, 39.4 miles north of the point where the accident occurred, 1 hour 5 minutes before the following train departed from that station. There was no open office between Flomaton and the point where the accident occurred. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, the crew of the following train would have received definite information that the preceding train was occupying the main track in the same block.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to provide adequate protection for the preceding train.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirtieth day of November, 1949.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.