

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2634
THE NASHVILLE, CHATTANOOGA & ST. LOUIS
RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR SOMEVILLE, TENN., ON
OCTOBER 14, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad: Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis
Date: October 14, 1942
Location: Somerville, Tenn.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: First 150 : Fourth 155
Engine numbers: 605 : 500-621
Consist: 30 cars, caboose : 48 cars, caboose
Speed: 25 m. p. h. : 30 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; tangent; 1.01 percent
descending grade southwa
Weather: Clear
Time: 7:30 a. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 6 injured
Cause: Accident caused by inferior train
occupying the main track on the
time of an opposing superior train
Recommendation: That the Nashville, Chattanooga &
St. Louis Railway Company establish
an adequate block system on the
line involved in this accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2634

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

THE NASHVILLE, CHATTANOOGA & ST. LOUIS
RAILWAY COMPANY

December 7, 1942.

Accident near Somerville, Tenn., on October 14, 1942, caused
by an inferior train occupying the main track on the
time of an opposing superior train.

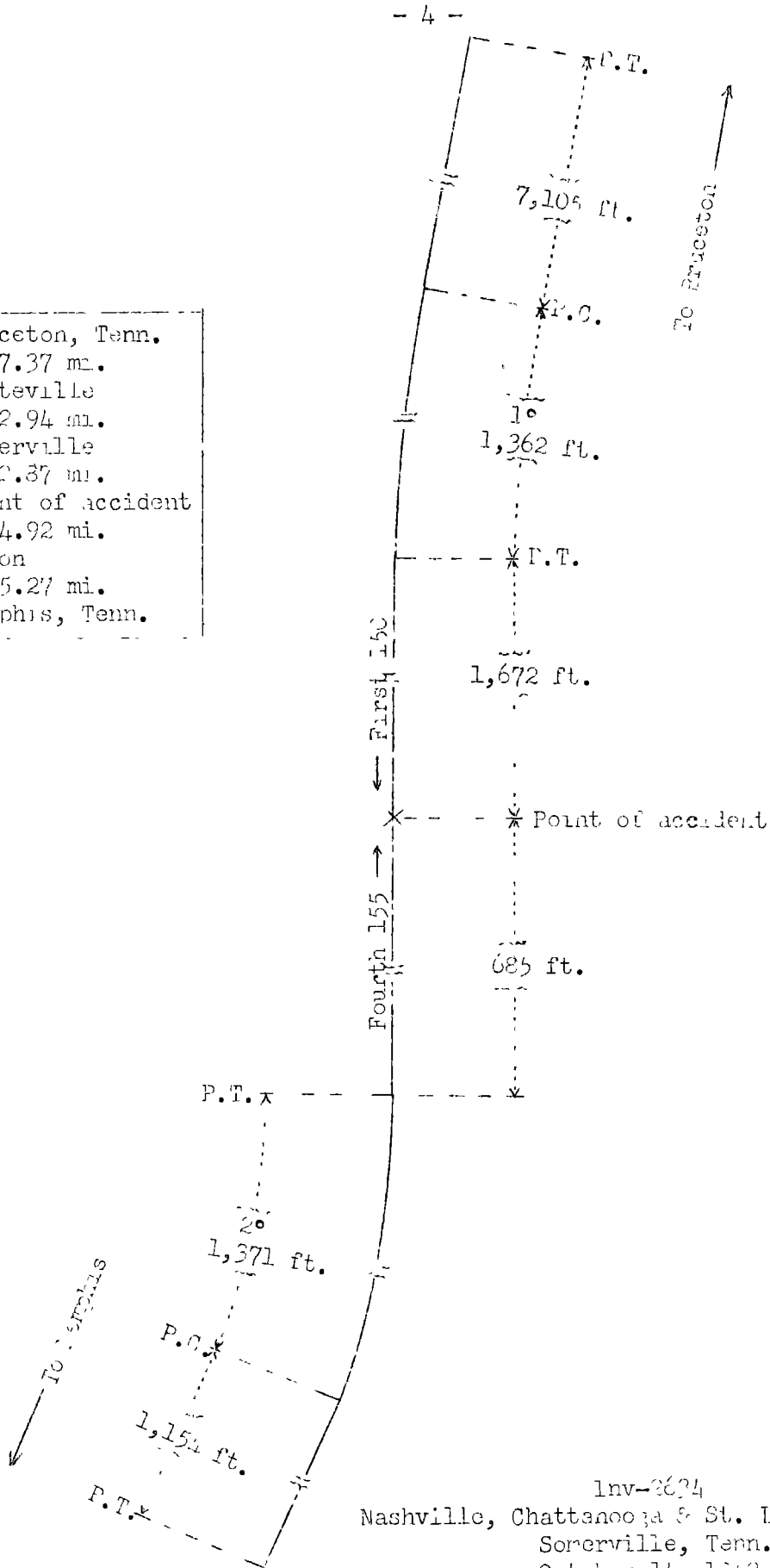
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 14, 1942, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway near Somerville, Tenn., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of six 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.

o	Bruceton, Tenn.	87.37 mi.
o	Whiteville	12.94 mi.
o	Somerville	2.37 mi.
X	Point of accident	34.92 mi.
o	Aulon	5.27 mi.
o	Memphis, Tenn.	



Inv-2634
 Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway
 Somerville, Tenn.
 October 14, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Paducah and Memphis Division extending between Bruceton and Memphis, Tenn., a distance of 143.37 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 2.87 miles south of the station at Somerville. Approaching from the north there are, in succession, a tangent 7,105 feet in length, a 1° curve to the left 1,362 feet, and a tangent 1,672 feet to the point of accident and 685 feet beyond. Approaching from the south there are, in succession, a tangent 1,154 feet in length, a 2° curve to the left 1,371 feet, and the tangent on which the accident occurred. The grade for south-bound trains is 1.01 percent descending a distance of 1,300 feet to the point of accident. The grade for north-bound trains is, successively, 0.67 percent ascending 300 feet, 1.17 percent ascending 800 feet, and 1.01 percent ascending 400 feet to the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

87. Inferior trains must keep out of the way of superior trains in the opposite direction, clearing their time as required by rule, * * *.

93. Certain yards will be indicated by yard or station limit signs. Within such limits the main track may be used, protecting against first and second class trains. Third class and extra trains must move on the main track under such control that they can stop within range of their vision.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS

EXAMPLES

(1.) No 2 has right over No 1 H to D.

This form of order makes the train over which right is given inferior to the train which is given right over it, between the points named, * * *

If the trains meet at the first or last named points, the train which is inferior by rule must take siding, * * *

* * *

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

North bound trains are superior to south bound trains of the same class, * * *

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 35 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

At Whiteville, 12.94 miles north of Somerville, First 150, a south-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engine 605, 30 cars and a caboose. At this point the crew received a clearance, Form A, and copies of two train orders, of which one was train order No. 241, Form 19, reading as follows:

First No 150 Eng 605 nas
right over Fourth No 155
Eng 500 Whiteville to Somerville

First 150 departed from Whiteville at 6:52 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 3 hours 6 minutes late, departed from Somerville, the last open office, at 7:24 a. m., 3 hours 9 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 25 miles per hour it collided with Fourth 155 at a point 2.87 miles south of the station at Somerville.

Fourth 155, a north-bound third-class freight train, consisted of engines 500 and 621, coupled, 48 cars and a caboose, in the order named. At Memphis, 43.06 miles south of Somerville, a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly. This train departed from Memphis at 4:10 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 7 hours 50 minutes late, departed from Aulon, 37.79 miles south of Somerville and the last open office, at 5:55 a. m., 8 hours 54 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with First 150.

The brakes of both trains had functioned properly at all points where used en route. There was no condition of the engines of either train that obscured the vision or distracted the attention of the employees who were on the engines. From an engine moving in either direction, in the vicinity of the point of accident, the view of a train approaching from the opposite direction is restricted to a distance of about 800 feet, because of vegetation on the east side of the track and track curvature.

The force of the impact demolished engines 605 and 500. The running gear of engine 605 stopped on the roadbed about 5 feet north of the point of accident, and the boiler stopped upright across the track and about 7 feet north of the running gear. The tender stopped across the track and about 55 feet north of the point of accident. The first 3 cars of First 150 were destroyed. The front truck of the fourth car was derailed. The running gear of engine 500 stopped about 15 feet west of the track and opposite the running gear of engine 605. The boiler of engine 500 stopped bottom up and against the running gear. The tender stopped between the track and the running gear. Engine 621 was derailed to the west and stopped, badly

damaged, on its left side, parallel to the track and with its front end about 10 feet north of the point of accident. The tender was derailed to the east and stopped at an angle of about 45 degrees to the track. The first 14 cars of Fourth 155 were destroyed. The front truck of the fifteenth car was derailed. The wreckage of both trains was contained within a distance of 205 feet.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:30 a. m.

The employee killed was the front brakeman of First 150. The employees injured were the conductor and the engineer of First 150 and both engineers and both firemen of Fourth 155.

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 20.5 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that an inferior train must keep out of the way of opposing superior trains. Unless otherwise provided, a train which has been given right over an opposing superior train must take siding at the point to which right is given unless the train over which right is given has been met at an intermediate point. Within yard limits the main track may be used protecting against first and second-class trains. Third-class and extra trains must be operated prepared to stop unless the way is seen or known to be clear. All surviving employees involved understood these requirements.

The trains involved were third-class trains. Fourth 155 was superior to First 150 by direction. Under the provisions of order No. 241, which was issued to First 150 at Whiteville and to Fourth 155 at Somerville, First 150 was given right over Fourth 155 from Whiteville to Somerville. At Somerville, yard-limit signs are located 5,233 feet north and 6,221 feet south of the station and there are two sidings within the yard limits. Since there was no overdue first-class schedule and no second-class schedules in effect, under the yard-limit rule First 150 was authorized to occupy the main track at Somerville, but was not authorized to proceed south of the south yard-limit sign unless Fourth 155 had been met. First 150 departed from Somerville and had proceeded a distance of 1.69 miles south of the south yard-limit sign when it collided with Fourth 155.

As Fourth 155 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 35 miles per hour, and the engineers of both engines and the front brakeman, who was on the first

engine, were maintaining a lookout ahead. The view of the track ahead was restricted because of track curvature and vegetation. The first the engineer of engine 500 knew of the opposing train was when his engine reached a point about 800 feet south of the point where the accident occurred and he observed the reflection of the headlight of First 150. He immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of Fourth 155 was about 30 miles per hour at the time of the collision.

As First 150 was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 30 miles per hour. The enginemen, the conductor and the front brakeman, who were maintaining a lookout ahead from the engine, and the flagman, who was on the caboose, knew that their train was inferior to Fourth 155 and that no train orders had been issued authorizing their train to proceed on the time of Fourth 155 beyond the south yard-limit sign at Somerville. They said that after their train stopped at Somerville to take coal and water they forgot about Fourth 155. The engineer saw Fourth 155 approaching at a distance of about 800 feet and he moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of First 150 was about 25 miles per hour at the time of collision.

In the territory involved trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use in this territory, this accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by an inferior train occupying the main track on the time of an opposing superior train.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this seventh day of December, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.