INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2702

THE SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT HEMINGWAY, S. C., ON

MAY 29, 1943

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Seaboard Air Line	
Date:	May 29, 1943	
Location:	Hemingway, S. C.	
Kind of accident:	Side collision	
Trains involved:	Freight	: Freight
Train numbers:	71	: Sixth 80
Engine numbers:	343	: 391
Consist:	1 auxiliary water car, 18 cars, caboose	: 1 auxiliary water car, 54 cars, caboose
Estimated speed:	10 m. p. h.	: 45 m. p. h.
Operation:	Timetable and train orders, and manual-block system for following passenger trains only	
Track:	Single; tangent; practically level	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	About 7:18 a. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 2 injured	
Cause:	Failure to obey meet order	
Recommendation:	That the Seaboard Air Line Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2702

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

THE SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY

July 14, 1943.

Accident at Hemingway, S. C., on May 29, 1943, caused by failure to obey a meet order.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On May 29, 1943, there was a side collision between two freight trains on the Seaboard Air Line Railway at Hemingway, S. C., which resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of two employees.

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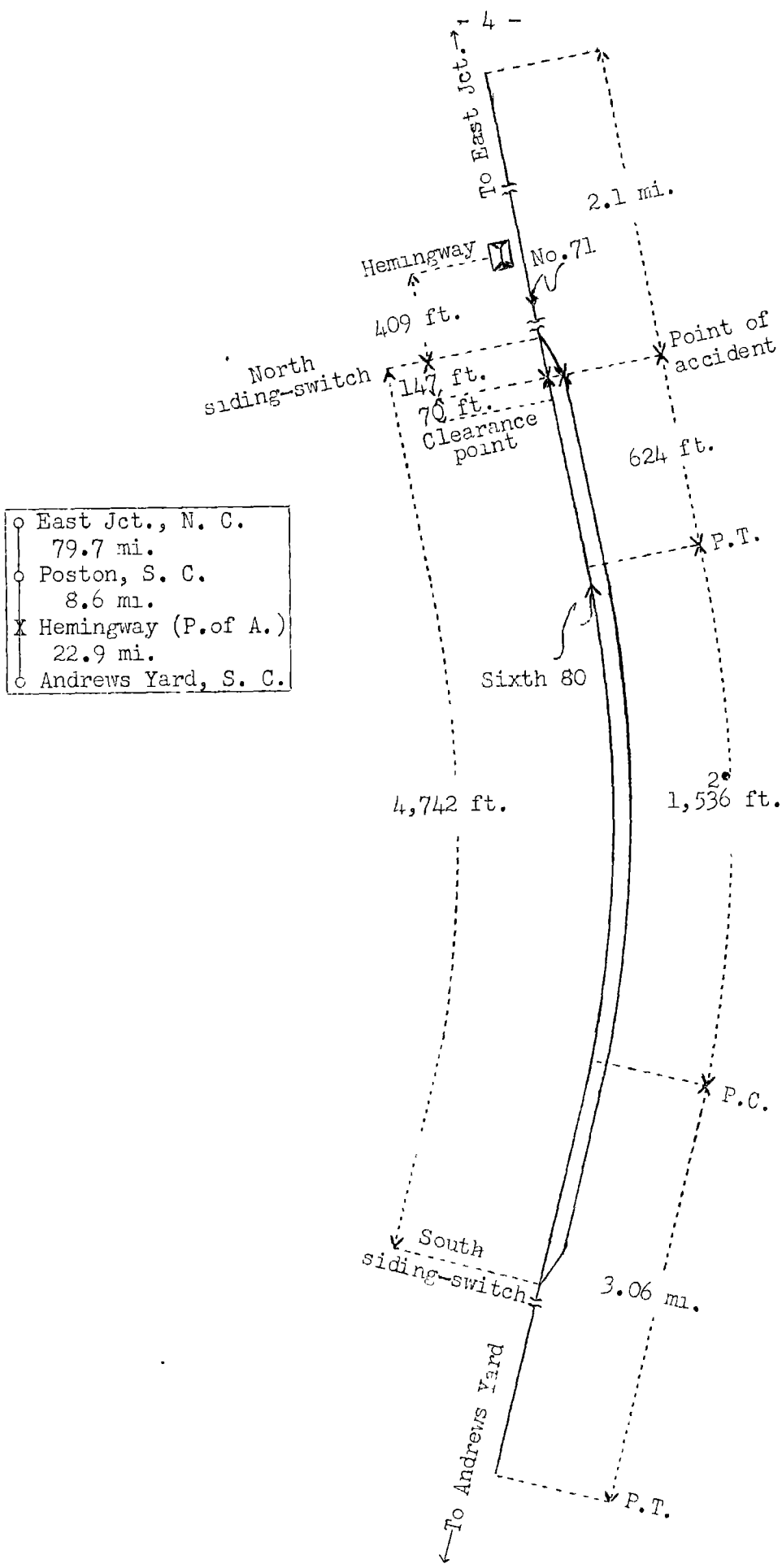
[1]Under authority of section 17 (2) of the Interstate Commerce Act the above-entitled proceeding was referred by the Commission to Commissioner Patterson for consideration and disposition.



Inv. No. 2702
Seaboard Air Line Railway
Hemingway, S. C.
May 29, 1943

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the South Carolina Division designated as the Andrews Sub-division and extending between Andrews Yard, S. C., and East Jct., N. C., 111.2 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this was a single-track line over which trains were operated by timetable and train orders, and a manual-block system for following passenger trains only. At Hemingway a siding 4,742 feet in length paralleled the main track on the east. The north switch of this siding was 409 feet south of the station. The accident occurred at the fouling point of the turnout 147 feet south of the north siding-switch. Approaching from the south there were, in succession, a tangent 3.06 miles in length, a 2° curve to the left 1,536 feet and a tangent 624 feet to the point of accident. At the point of accident the grade was practically level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

Rule 14 (n). ___ ___ o (engine and motor whistle signal). Indication: Approaching meeting, waiting or passing points, * * * (See Rule 90).

72. * * *

Trains in the direction specified by the time-table are superior to trains of the same class in the opposite direction.

90. At meeting points trains must stop clear of switch used by the train to be met in going in on the siding, * * *.

* * *

* * * the engineman will give Signal 14 (n) at least two (2) miles before reaching a meeting, waiting or passing point. This signal will be answered by the conductor by giving a "slow down" signal by holding out hand by day * * * at arms length on engineman's side of train. This signal must be answered by the engineman by Signal 14 (n). Should engineman fail to give this meeting point signal, or fail to take action to stop short of fouling point when required, conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

* * *

90-B. * * * when trains of any class meet by train orders, the train which holds main track at meeting point will reduce speed as necessary to insure both trains making proper exchange of identification with each other. Such speed not to exceed * * * twenty (20) miles per hour for freight * * * trains.

FORMS OF TRAIN ORDERS.

* * *

Form S-A. Fixing Meeting Points for Opposing trains.

Examples.

(1) * * *

No. 3, Eng. 222, meet Second 4, Eng. 223, at "C."

* * *

Trains receiving these orders will run with respect to each other to the designated points and there meet in the manner prescribed by the rules.

Time-table special instructions read in part as follows:

(Rule 72) All northward trains are superior to trains of the same class in opposite direction.

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains was 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 71, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 343, 1 auxiliary water car, 17 loaded cars, 1 empty car and a caboose. At Poston, 8.6 miles north of Hemingway and the last open office, the crew received a clearance card and copies of two train orders, of which one was train order No. 437 reading as follows:

Sixtn 80 eng 391 meet No
71 eng 343 at Hemingway

No. 71 departed from Poston at 7:02 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 6 hours 47 minutes late, and when it was entering the north siding-switch at Hemingway and moving at an estimated speed of 10 miles per hour the ninth car was struck by Sixth 80.

Sixth 80, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 391, 1 auxiliary water car, 51 loaded and 3 empty cars and a caboose. At Andrews Yard, 22.9 miles south of Hemingway and the last open office, the crew received a clearance card and copies of three train orders, of which one was train order No. 437. This train departed from Andrews Yard at 6:37 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 8 hours 15 minutes late, passed the clearance point of the north siding-switch at Hemingway, where it was required to wait unless No. 71 was into clear, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles per hour it collided with No. 71 at the fouling point of the turnout.

From the right side of a north-bound engine the view of the point where the accident occurred is restricted to about 670 feet, and from the left side to about 1,400 feet, because of trees adjacent to the track and track curvature.

The engine, the first five cars and the front truck of the sixth car of Sixth 80 and the ninth to thirteenth cars, inclusive, of No. 71, were derailed. Of these cars, seven were demolished and the remainder were badly damaged. Three cars contained explosives and there was a detonation when the collision occurred. Engine 391 and its tender, remaining coupled, were badly damaged and stopped upright, east of the main track and 276 feet north of the point of collision.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 7:18 a. m.

The engineer of Sixth 80 was killed. The fireman and the front brakeman of Sixth 80 were injured.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 19.3 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on this line provided that at a meeting point the superior train must stop clear of the switch to be used by the train which is required to enter the siding. The engineer of each train must sound the meeting-point whistle signal not less than 2 miles before the train reaches a meeting point. If an engineer fails to sound the proper signal, or fails to take action to stop the train short of the fouling point, the conductor must take immediate action to stop the train.

The crew of each train held copies of train order No. 437, which established Hemingway as the meeting point between Sixth 80, a north-bound second-class train, and No. 71, a south-bound second-class train. Sixth 80 was superior by direction and was required to stop short of the fouling point of the north siding-switch at Hemingway unless No. 71 was into clear on the siding. As No. 71 was entering the siding at the north switch, Sixth 80 passed the clearance point and struck the ninth car of No. 71 at the fouling point of the turnout.

The engineer of No. 71 said his engine had just entered the siding when he saw Sixth 80 approaching about 1,400 feet distant. The speed of Sixth 80 appeared to be too fast for it to stop before the engine reached the fouling point. He immediately sounded the engine whistle to warn the engineer of Sixth 80 and increased the speed of his train in an unsuccessful attempt to clear the main track before Sixth 80 reached the fouling point. He estimated the speed of his train as 10 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

About 1 hour before the accident occurred, the crew of Sixth 80 received copies of train order No. 437 at Andrews Yard, 22.9 miles south of Hemingway. The conductor, the fireman and the front brakeman said they read the order and discussed it with the engineer. The flagman read the order and discussed it with the conductor. It was understood that their train was required to stop clear of the fouling point of the north siding-switch at Hemingway unless No. 71 was into clear on the siding. As Sixth 80 was approaching Hemingway, the speed was about 45 miles per hour. The enginemen and the front brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead. There was no condition of the engine that obscured the view ahead or distracted their attention. When the engine reached a point about 1-1/2 miles south of Hemingway the engineer sounded the meeting-point signal. When the engine passed the vicinity of the south siding-switch the fireman and the front brakeman called a warning to the engineer, but the engineer did not appear to hear them and he took no action to reduce the speed. When the engine was about 1,400 feet south of the north siding-switch the fireman and the front brakeman observed that No. 71 was not into clear on the siding. The front brakeman crossed to the right side of

the engine and again warned the engineer, then he crossed to the left side and jumped off. He did not observe what action was taken by the engineer. The fireman said he jumped off the engine soon after the front brakeman jumped off, and he thought the engineer moved the brake valve to emergency position when the engine was about 300 feet south of the point of accident. It could not be determined why the engineer failed to take action to stop his train short of the fouling point of the north siding-switch, as he was killed in the accident. The conductor and the flagman were in the caboose as Sixth 80 was approaching Hemingway. The conductor said that when the caboose reached a point about 900 feet north of the south siding-switch the flagman informed him that No. 71 was not into clear and he opened the conductor's air valve, but this action was not taken soon enough to avert the accident.

The manual-block system used on this line applies to following movements of first-class trains and passenger trains only. The book of operating rules of this railroad contains manual-block rules which provide for the blocking of opposing movements as well as following movements, but these rules are not in effect on the territory involved. During the 18-month period immediately preceding the day of the accident, five other accidents, resulting in the death of 6 persons and the injury of 134 persons, occurred on the lines of this carrier in territory where trains were operated under the same system as that involved in the accident at Hemingway. The Commission's reports covering the investigations of these accidents stated that if an adequate block system had been in use, the accidents would not have occurred. In the instant case, if an adequate block system had been in use, the crew of Sixth 80 would have received definite information that their train was required to stop short of the clearance point, and the accident would have been averted.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure to obey a meet order.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Seaboard Air Line Railway Company establish an adequate block system on the line on which this accident occurred.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this fourteenth day of July, 1943.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.