

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2571  
THE SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY  
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT LYPOUXO, FLA., ON  
FEBRUARY 19, 1942

## SUMMARY

Railroad: Seaboard Air Line

Date: February 19, 1942

Location: Hypoluxo, Fla.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Trains involved: Passenger : Passenger

Train numbers: 7 : 808

Engine numbers Diesel-electric : Diesel-electric  
3003 and 3004 3013 and 3102

Consist: 11 cars : 7 cars

Speed: 50 m. p. h. : 12-15 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders, and  
manual-block system for follow-  
ing passenger trains only

Track: Single; 1°55' curve; level

Weather: Misty

Time: About 11:53 a. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 78 injured

Cause: Accident caused by failure to obey  
meet order

Recommendation: That the Seaboard Air Line Railway  
Company immediately establish an  
adequate block system on the line  
involved in this accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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INVESTIGATION NO. 2571

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

THE SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILWAY COMPANY

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March 20, 1942

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Accident at Hypoluxo, Fla., on February 19, 1942, caused  
by failure to obey a meet order.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION<sup>1</sup>

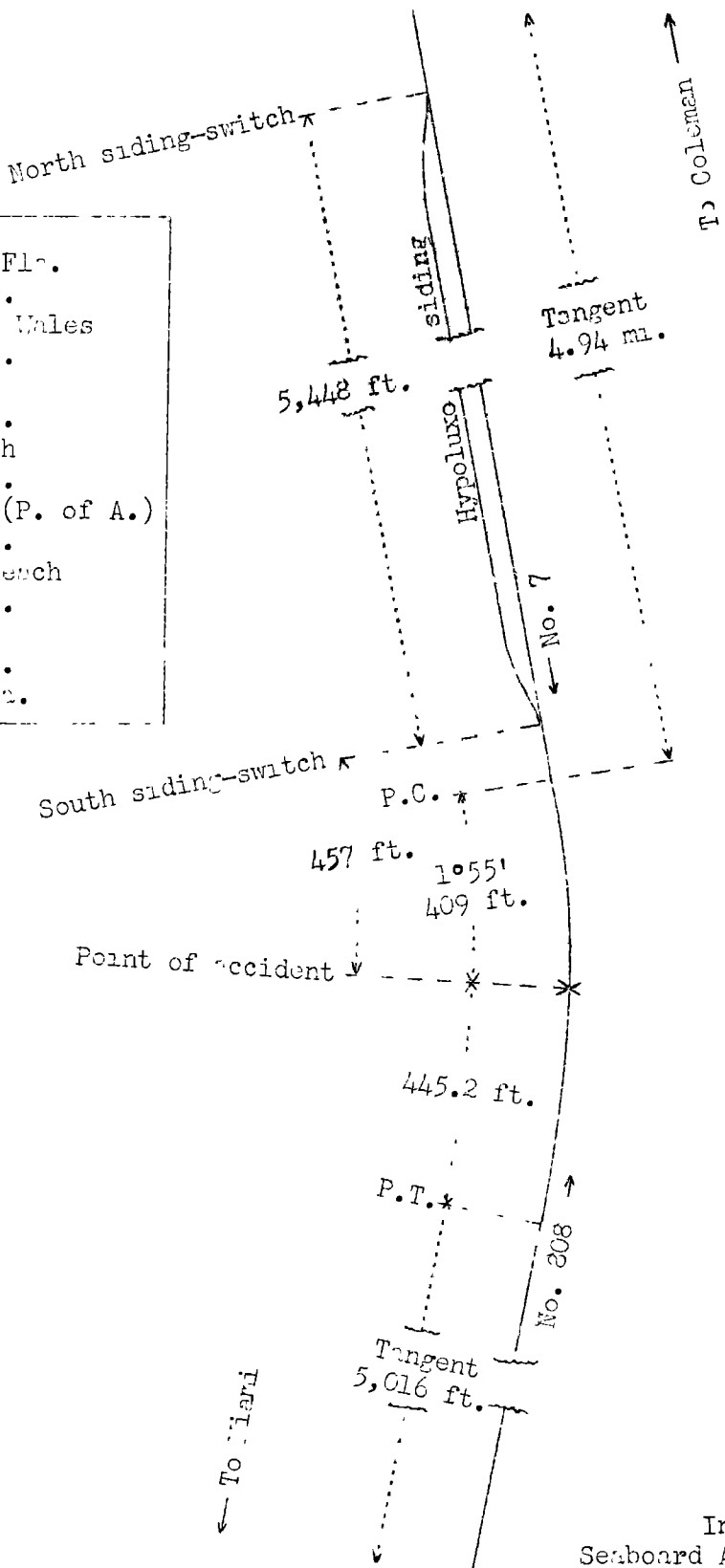
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On February 19, 1942, there was a head-end collision between two passenger trains on the Seaboard Air Line Railway at Hypoluxo, Fla., which resulted in the death of 2 train-service employees, and the injury of 47 passengers, 1 railway-mail clerk, 1 Diesel-engine instructor, 7 Pullman employees, 18 dining-car employees, 1 train porter and 3 train-service employees.

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<sup>1</sup>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.

- Coleman, Fla. 69.7 mi.
- West Lake Wales 112.1 mi.
- Scott 28.6 mi.
- Lake Worth 4.3 mi.
- X Hypoluxo (P. of A.) 2.2 mi.
- Boynton Beach 36.7 mi.
- Hollywood 20.3 mi.
- Miami, Fla.



Inv-2571  
 Seaboard Air Line Railway  
 Hypoluxo, Fla.  
 February 19, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the North Florida Division designated as the Coleman Sub-division, which extends between Coleman and Miami, Fla., a distance of 273.9 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, and a manual-block system for following passenger trains only. At Hypoluxo, a non-train-order station, a siding 5,448 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The south switch of this siding is 1,971 feet south of the station. The accident occurred at a point 457 feet south of the south siding-switch. As the point of accident is approached from the north there is a tangent 4.98 miles in length, which is followed by a 1°55' curve to the right 409 feet to the point of accident and 445.2 feet beyond. As the point of accident is approached from the south there is a tangent 5,016 feet in length, which is followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. At the point of accident the grade is level.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

14. Engine and Motor Whistle Signals.

\* \* \*

(n) — — ° Approaching meeting or waiting points. See Rule 90.

90. \* \* \*

Trains must stop clear of switch used by the train to be met in going in on the siding. The engineman of each train will give signal 14-N at least one mile before reaching a meeting or waiting point. On passenger trains this signal will be answered by the conductor by one short blast of the air whistle signal, \* \* \*.

Should the engineman fail to give signal 14-N, as herein provided, conductors and trainmen will 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 thirty (30) miles per hour for passenger trains \* \* \*.

Bulletin Notice No. 418 reads in part as follows:

"The engineman of each train will give signal 14-N immediately after passing last station before the meeting or waiting point is reached and in no case less than two miles from the meeting or waiting point." \* \* \*

Special time-table instructions read in part as follows:

F 17--All first class trains and all trains carrying passengers, moving in the same direction, will be blocked one telegraph station apart. \* \* \*

On the curve involved the maximum authorized speed for the trains involved is 60 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 7, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric engines 3003 and 3004, one club-baggage car, six Pullman sleeping cars, one dining car, one lounge car and two Pullman sleeping cars, in the order named. All cars were of steel construction. At Wildwood, 219.3 miles north of Hypoluxo, a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly at all points where used en route. At West Lake Wales, 145 miles north of Hypoluxo, the crew received copies of train order No. 436, Form 19, which read as follows:

No 7 Eng 3003 Meet  
No 44 Eng 3016 at Scott and  
No 808 Eng 3013 at Hypoluxo  
No 44 and No 808 take siding

This train departed from West Lake Wales at 9:47 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 28 minutes late, passed Lake Worth, 4.3 miles north of Hypoluxo and the last open office, at 11:49 a. m. 16 minutes late, passed the fouling point of the south siding-switch at Hypoluxo, where it was required to wait unless No. 808 was on the siding, and while moving at an estimated speed of 50 miles per hour it collided with No. 808 at a point 457 feet south of the south siding-switch.

No. 808, a north-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric engines 3013 and 3102, one express car, one passenger-mail car, three coaches, one dining car and one Pullman sleeping car, in the order named. All cars

were of steel construction. At Miami, 59.2 miles south of Hypoluxo, a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly en route. At Hollywood, 38.9 miles south of Hypoluxo, the crew received copies of train order No. 436, previously quoted. This train departed from Hollywood at 10:57 a. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, 12 minutes late, passed Boynton Beach, 2.2 miles south of Hypoluxo and the last open office, at 11:50 a. m., on time, and while moving at an estimated speed of 12 to 15 miles per hour it collided with No. 7.

Because of track curvature and a growth of trees on the west side of the track, the view of an approaching train from an engine moving in either direction is restricted to a distance of about 2,000 feet.

Engines 3003 and 3004, of No. 7, were derailed to the east and stopped with the front end of engine 3003 about 325 feet south of the point of collision and 18 feet east of the track. Both engines were demolished. The first car was derailed to the east and stopped with its front and rear ends, respectively, 40 feet and 10 feet east of the track. The roof was torn off about one-half its length and the side sheets were buckled inward. This car was destroyed. The second car was derailed to the east and stopped upright, badly damaged, between the first car and the track. The third car was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, diagonally across the track, against engines 3013 and 3102 and leaned toward the west at an angle of 60 degrees. The fourth car was derailed to the west and stopped, badly damaged, on its right side at the edge of the roadbed. The posts of the front vestibule were badly bent and the end sheets were crushed inward. The force of the impact moved No. 808 backward about 54 feet. Engines 3013 and 3102 were derailed to the west and stopped with the front end of engine 3013 about 20 feet west of the track and 18 feet south of the point of collision. The front end of this engine was telescoped a distance of about 20 feet. Both engines were destroyed. The first, second and third cars of No. 808 were derailed toward the west and stopped upright, considerably damaged, and practically in line with the track. The front end of the third car was telescoped a distance of 15 feet by the rear end of the second car.

It was misting at the time of the accident, which occurred about 11:53 a. m.

The train-service employees killed were the engineer of No. 808 and the fireman of No. 7, and the train-service employees injured were the engineer and the baggage-master

of No. 7, and the fireman and the train porter of No. 808.

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 16.1 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that at meeting points the superior train must stop clear of the switch to be used by the train entering the siding. The engineer of each train must sound the meeting-point whistle signal not less than 2 miles in advance of the meeting point. If an engineer fails to sound the proper signal, the conductor and trainmen must take action to stop the train. In addition, the train holding the main track is required to reduce speed to 30 miles per hour as it approaches the meeting point and not to exceed that speed until the train to be met is identified.

The crews of both trains held copies of train order No. 436, which established Hypoluxo as the meeting point between No. 7, a south-bound first-class passenger train, and No. 808, a north-bound first-class passenger train. No. 808 was superior by direction but the order required it to enter the south siding-switch to meet No. 7 and No. 7 was required to stop short of the fouling point of the south siding-switch unless No. 808 was into clear on the siding. These requirements were understood by all surviving members of both crews involved who were able to attend the investigation.

The fireman of No. 808 said that at a point about 2 miles south of Hypoluxo the engineer sounded the meeting-point whistle signal and it was acknowledged on the train air-signal whistle. As his train was approaching the point where the accident occurred, the speed was about 50 miles per hour, and the engineer and he were maintaining a lookout ahead. The engineer made a service brake-pipe reduction to reduce speed in preparation for stopping at the south siding-switch. At that time the fireman observed No. 7 in the vicinity of the south siding-switch. Soon afterward both enginemen observed that No. 7 was south of the switch, and the engineer immediately moved the brake valve to emergency position but the distance was not sufficient to stop before No. 7 collided with No. 808. The speed of No. 808 was about 12 or 15 miles per hour at the time of the collision, which occurred 457 feet south of the south siding-switch.



The conductor, the baggageman and the flagman of No. 7 had read train order No. 436 and understood that their train was required not to pass the fouling point of the south siding-switch unless No. 808 was into clear on the siding. The conductor said that after his train passed Lake Worth he heard the engine whistle sounded and, thinking it was the meeting-point signal, he acknowledged it on the air signal. He said that it is difficult to distinguish engine whistle signals from inside passenger cars. As his train was approaching Hypoluxo the speed was about 75 miles per hour and he was in the tenth car delivering several telegrams to passengers. This was a compartment car and, because the compartments were on the west side of the car and the siding was on the west side of the main track, he was unable to determine when his train reached the siding at Hypoluxo. He thought the engineer was complying with the provisions of the meet order, because he felt the train brakes being applied and the speed being gradually reduced. The accident occurred before the conductor was able to reach a point in the train from which he could observe if No. 808 was on the siding, or whether his train was being operated prepared to stop. He thought the brakes were applied in emergency just prior to the time of the collision, at which time the speed was 50 miles per hour. The baggageman said that after his train left Lake Worth he was not certain that the engineer sounded the meeting-point whistle signal as the whistle was being sounded for several highway crossings, but he sounded the train air signal in acknowledgment. He was engaged in clerical duties and failed to observe the location of his train with respect to the siding at Hypoluxo; however, he felt the train brakes being applied in service and thought it was in preparation for stopping if No. 808 was not on the siding. Before he became aware that the engine had passed the fouling point, the train brakes were applied in emergency and the collision occurred. According to the statement of the flagman, he was on the rear platform of the rear car and, when the rear of the train was at a point about 5,000 feet north of the south siding-switch, he sounded the train air signal to stop. He immediately felt the brakes being applied in service and took no further action as he thought the train was being operated prepared to stop. The engineer was so severely injured that a statement could not be obtained from him at the time of the investigation and the fireman was killed in the accident; therefore, it could not be determined why action was not taken on the engine to stop No. 7 short of the fouling point at the switch involved. Undoubtedly the engine crew of No. 7 received a copy of the order involved, as this train moved from Indiantown to Scott, a distance of 11.6 miles, against the schedule of No. 44, a superior train, in compliance with one of the provisions contained in the order. All members of the train crew felt the train brakes being applied in service in the vicinity of the

siding at Hypoluxo, but they failed to observe if further action was being taken to operate the train prepared to stop or whether No. 808 was on the siding. The speed was restricted to 60 miles per hour on the curve immediately south of the south siding-switch, and it is probable the engineer applied the brakes to reduce speed for this curve. If the members of the train crew had observed that their train was not being operated prepared to stop, action could have been taken to avert the accident.

The manual-block system is used on the line involved for 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. If an adequate block system had been in use on the line involved, this accident would not have occurred.

#### 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 immediately establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington D. C., this twentieth day of March, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

W. P. BARTEL,

(SEAL)

Secretary.