

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

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REPORT NO. 3707  
SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD COMPANY  
IN RE ACCIDENT  
AT COLUMBUS YARD, GA., ON  
SEPTEMBER 24, 1956

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## SUMMARY

Date: September 24, 1956

Railroad: Seaboard Air Line

Location: Columbus Yard, Ge.

Kind of accident: Head-end collision

Equipment involved: Locomotive with cars : Freight train

Train number: : Extra 4511 West

Locomotive numbers: Diesel-electric unit 1201 : Diesel-electric units 4511 and 4302

Consists: 4 cars : 32 cars, cabooses

Estimated speeds: Undetermined : 8 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable and train orders; yard limits

Track: Single; 4° curve; 0.43 percent descending grade eastward

Weather: Misting

Time: 4 p. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control the speed of the freight train moving within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

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REPORT NO. 3707

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

SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

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November 13, 1956

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Accident at Columbus Yard, Ga., on September 24, 1956,  
caused by failure properly to control the speed of  
the freight train moving within yard limits.

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

CLARKE, Commissioner:

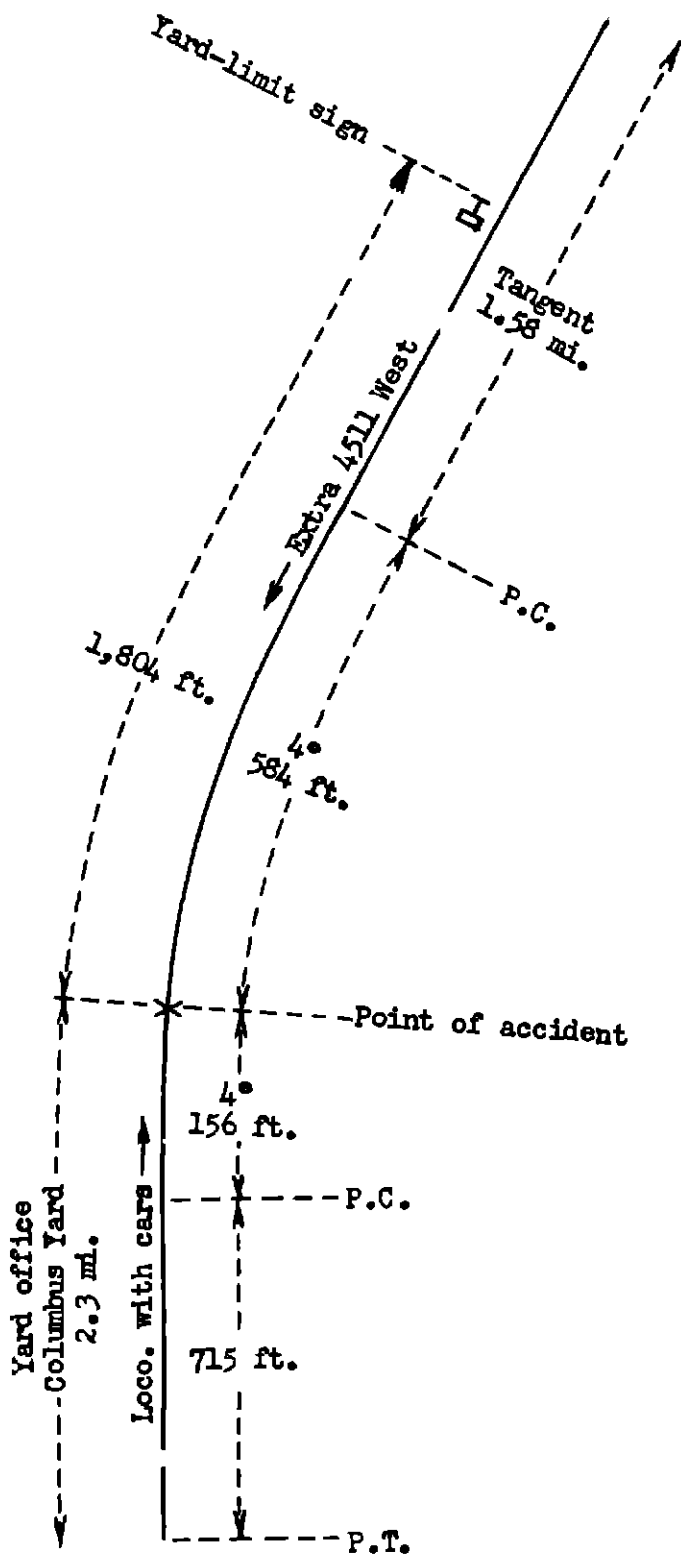
On September 24, 1956, there was a head-end collision between a locomotive with cars and a freight train on the Seaboard Air Line Railroad at Columbus Yard, Ga., which resulted in the death of one train-service employee, and the injury of one train-service employee.

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

To Bainbridge →



- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| ○ | Bainbridge, Ga.     |
|   | 111.8 mi.           |
| ○ | Cusseta             |
|   | 18.1 mi.            |
| X | Columbus Yard, Ga.  |
|   | (Point of accident) |

Report No. 3707  
 Seaboard Air Line Railroad  
 Columbus Yard, Ga.  
 September 24, 1956

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Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Alabama Division extending between Columbus Yard, Columbus, Ga., and Bainbridge, Ga., 129.9 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. There is no block system in use for freight trains. The accident occurred on the main track within yard limits at Columbus Yard, at a point 2.3 miles east of the yard office and 1,804 feet west of the east yard-limit sign. From the west there is a tangent 715 feet in length and a 4° curve to the right 156 feet to the point of accident and 584 feet eastward. From the east there is a tangent 1.58 miles in length and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is 0.43 percent descending eastward at the point of accident.

The range of vision between opposing movements approaching the point of accident is considerably restricted by lumber piled along the south side of the track on the curve on which the accident occurred.

This carrier's operating rules read in part as follows:

## DEFINITIONS

Yard Speed--A speed that will permit stopping within one-half the range of vision.

93. \* \* \*

Within yard limits the main track may be used clearing the time of first class trains at the next station where time is shown; second and inferior class and extra trains and engines will approach and move between yard limit boards on main track at yard speed, and \* \* \* protection against second and inferior class and extra trains and engines is not required.

\* \* \*

The maximum authorized speed for freight trains in the vicinity of the point of accident is 35 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

About 3:55 p. m. Diesel-electric unit 1201, assigned to yard service at Columbus Yard, departed east-bound from an auxiliary track approximately 1.8 miles east of the yard office. The locomotive was pulling three loaded cars and

one empty car. While it was moving eastward on the main track at an undetermined rate of speed it collided with Extra 4511 West at a point 2.3 miles east of the yard office and 1,804 feet west of the east yard-limit sign.

Extra 4511 West, a west-bound freight train, consisted, at the time of the accident, of Diesel-electric units 4511 and 4302, coupled in multiple-unit control, 32 cars, and a caboose. This train passed Cusseta, 18.1 miles east of Columbus Yard and the last open office, at 3:23 p. m., and while it was moving at an estimated speed of 8 miles per hour it collided with yard locomotive 1201.

Locomotive 1201 was moved westward a distance of 79 feet by the force of the impact. Both ends of the locomotive were badly damaged. The first car behind locomotive 1201, an all-steel box car, and the front end of the first Diesel-electric unit of Extra 4511 West were considerably damaged. The second Diesel-electric unit of Extra 4511 West, the first car, and the front truck of the second car were derailed but were not damaged.

The yard conductor of locomotive 1201 was killed. The conductor of Extra 4511 West was injured.

Rain had been falling at intervals, and there was a light mist at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4 p. m.

Diesel-electric unit 1201 is of the switcher type. At the time of the accident the control compartment was at the west end of the unit.

### Discussion

When the accident occurred yard locomotive 1201 was en route from an auxiliary track about 1/2 mile west of the point of accident to an auxiliary track a short distance east of the point of accident. As this movement was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was 8 or 10 miles per hour, as estimated by the engineer. The engine-men, two yard brakemen, and the yard conductor were in the control compartment of the locomotive. Normal brake-pipe pressure was being maintained in the air-brake system of the cars. The surviving members of the crew said they had no knowledge of the location of Extra 4511 West. The engineer said that because of the lumber piled along the south side of the track he was unable to see Extra 4511 West until the locomotives were a distance which he thought was about

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400 feet apart. When he saw the train he immediately called a warning and made an emergency application of the brakes. All of the employees on the locomotive except the yard conductor alighted before the collision occurred. None of the surviving employees saw the collision, and none of them knew whether their locomotive was still in motion when the collision occurred.

The crew of Extra 4511 West held copies of a train order relieving them from providing flag protection against following trains. As this train was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen, the front brakeman, the conductor, and the flagman were in the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The engineer said that the train approached the curve on which the accident occurred at a speed of approximately 15 miles per hour, as indicated by the speed-indicating device. When the locomotive reached a point from which the yard locomotive was visible from the control compartment, the engineer, the fireman, and the front brakeman saw the yard locomotive at approximately the same time. When they saw the locomotive the engineer immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. The engineer estimated that the speed had been reduced to about 8 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The fireman did not see the collision. The other employees on the locomotive said that the yard locomotive was still in motion when the collision occurred.

During the investigation of the accident the engineer of the yard locomotive located a Diesel-electric unit similar to unit 1201 at the point from which he had first seen Extra 4511 West, and a Diesel-electric unit similar to unit 4511 at the point at which the locomotive of Extra 4511 West had been when he first saw it. The distances were then measured, and it was found that the front of the yard locomotive was approximately 134 feet west of the point of collision. The front of the locomotive of the opposing train was 411 feet east of the point of collision. The engineer of Extra 4511 West located one of the Diesel-electric units at the point from which he had first seen the yard locomotive, and the other at the point at which the yard locomotive had been when he first saw it. It was found that the front of the west-bound locomotive was 352 feet east of the point of collision, and the front of the yard locomotive was 350 feet west of the point of collision.

The rules of this carrier provide that within yard limits extra trains and engines will move at a speed which will permit stopping within one-half the range of vision.

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In the instant case the engineer of yard locomotive 1201 said he thought his locomotive would have stopped within one-half his range of vision if it had not collided with Extra 4511 West before it reached that point. The engineer of Extra 4511 West said he thought he was operating at a speed which would enable him to stop within one-half his range of vision. He said that at the time he saw the yard locomotive and made the emergency application of the brakes he thought his train would stop before a collision occurred.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the freight train moving within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this thirteenth day of November, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,  
Secretary.