

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3682
SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR FORT GREEN SPRINGS, FLA., ON
APRIL 11, 1956

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3682

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

SEABOARD AIR LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

May 25, 1956

Accident near Fort Green Springs, Fla., on April 11, 1956,
caused by failure to stop a motor-truck short of a
train moving over a rail-highway grade crossing.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On April 11, 1956, there was a collision between a passenger train on the Seaboard Air Line Railroad and a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing near Fort Green Springs, Fla., which resulted in the death of the driver of the motor-truck, one express messenger, and one train-service employee, and the injury of one passenger, two Pullman Company employees, one train porter, and one train-service employee.

¹ 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.

Crossing-whistle sign

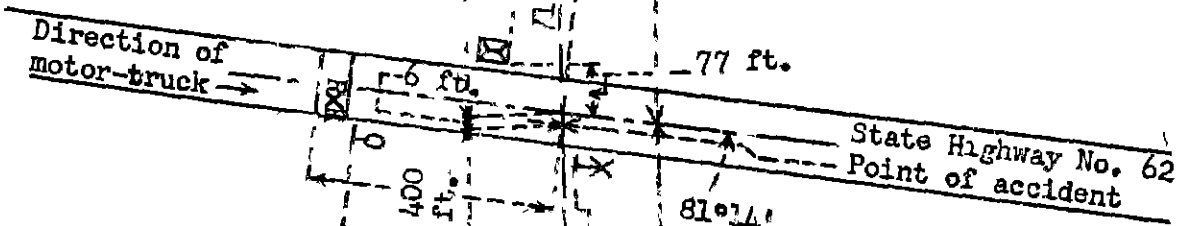
To Edison, Fla.

1,257 ft.

Tangent 8.6 mi.

No. 321

- Edison, Fla. 10.7 mi.
- Brewster 11.2 mi.
- X Point of accident 0.3 mi.
- Fort Green Springs 74.3 mi.
- Port Boca Grande, Fla.



Railroad-crossing advance-warning sign

335 ft.

1,307 ft.

Railroad-crossing sign

Tangent

← To Port Boca Grande, Fla.

Fort Green Springs

Report No. 3682
 Seaboard Air Line Railroad
 Near Fort Green Springs, Fla.
 April 11, 1956

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the South Florida Division extending between Edison and Port Boca Grande, Fla., 96.5 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 except between first-class trains or passenger trains moving in the same direction. The accident occurred on the main track at a point 21.9 miles south of Edison and 1,807 feet north of the station at Fort Green Springs, where the railroad is crossed at grade by State Highway No. 62. The railroad is tangent throughout a distance of 2.6 miles immediately north of the point of accident and a considerable distance southward. The grade is 0.43 percent ascending southward at the point of accident.

State Highway No. 62 is tangent throughout a distance of over 2,000 feet immediately west of the crossing and several hundred feet eastward. It intersects the railroad at an angle of $21^{\circ}14'$. It is surfaced to a width of 20 feet with bituminous material. A 6-inch by 12-inch plank is laid on each side of each rail throughout the width of the crossing, and the remaining area of the crossing is surfaced with bituminous material to the level of the tops of the rails. The grade for east-bound vehicles is 1.80 percent ascending throughout a distance of 400 feet immediately west of the crossing.

A circular railroad-crossing advance-warning sign is located on the south side of the highway at a point 335 feet west of the railroad. This sign is 30 inches in diameter and is mounted on a mast 4 feet above the level of the highway. It bears two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" in black on a yellow background. At points 350 feet and 400 feet west of the railroad a yellow line 2 feet in width is painted on the surface of the highway across its entire width. In the eastward traffic lane of the highway, between these two lines, there are two diagonal lines intersecting at right angles and the letters "RR" painted in yellow. At the time the accident occurred a standard crossbuck railroad-crossing sign was located in the southeast angle of the intersection of the highway and the railroad. This sign was mounted on a mast 9 feet 8 inches above the level of the highway and bore the words "RAILROAD CROSSING" in black on a white background. The mast bore the words "LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS" in black on a white background. A crossing-whistle sign for south-bound trains is located 1,557 feet north of the crossing.

- 6 -

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

14. ENGINE WHISTLE SIGNALS

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

Sound:	Indication:
* * *	
(1) -- -- o --	Approaching public crossings at grade. (See Rule 972)
* * *	

TRAIN SIGNALS

17. The headlight will be displayed to the front of every train by day and by night. * * *

30. * * * the engine bell must be rung when an engine is * * * approaching and passing public crossings at grade * * *

ENGINEMEN

972. Enginemen, when reaching standard whistle post, will sound Signal 14-(1), beginning at whistle post and continuing until engine passes over crossing. * * *

Rules and regulations for drivers of the motor carrier read in part as follows:

Railroad Crossings -- You must come to a complete stop at railroad crossings * * *

The maximum authorized speed for passenger trains is 50 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 321, a south-bound first-class passenger train, consisted of Diesel-electric unit 2701, one express car, one coach, and one sleeping car, in the order named. The first and second cars were of conventional all-steel construction, and the third car was of lightweight construction. This train departed from Brewster, Fla., 10.7 miles south of Edison, the last open office, at 9:31 a. m., 7 minutes late, and while moving at an estimated speed of 45 miles

per hour it was struck by a motor-truck at a rail-highway grade crossing 21.9 miles south of Edison and 1,807 feet north of the station at Fort Green Springs, where the rail-road is crossed at grade by State Highway No. 62.

The vehicle involved was a tractor and semi-trailer owned by Redwing Carriers, Inc., Tampa, Fla. The driver, who was the sole occupant, held Florida chauffeur's license No. 105528. The tractor was a 1955 Mack, Model B 42-T, and bore Florida license No. 3 C/V 5296. It was powered by a 6-cylinder 150-horsepower gasoline engine. The semi-trailer was a 1955 Frazier cargo tank and bore Florida license No. 3-0-792. Both the tractor and the semi-trailer were equipped with air brakes. The capacity of the semi-trailer was 8,300 gallons, and at the time of the accident it was loaded to capacity with gasoline. The cargo was loaded at Tampa and was destined to Wauchula, Fla. The overall length of the vehicle was 49 feet 9 inches, and the estimated gross weight was 70,000 pounds. This vehicle was moving eastward on State Highway No. 62, and while moving at an estimated speed of 40 miles per hour it struck the side of No. 321.

Marks on the equipment of No. 321 indicated that the front end of the tractor struck the rear end of the locomotive. Apparently the front of the tractor was deflected toward the south, and the front end of the semi-trailer struck the side of the first car near the front door corner post. The rear end of the semi-trailer then struck the side of the second car near the front end and above the side sill. The rear truck of the first car and both trucks of the second and third cars were derailed. There were no separations between the units of the train. The train stopped with the front end of the locomotive 395 feet south of the point of accident. The cars remained approximately upright and in line with the track. The tractor and semi-trailer stopped with the rear end on the south edge of the highway and the front end toward the southwest. The cargo tank of the semi-trailer was ruptured in the collision, and escaping gasoline became ignited. The motor-truck and the second car were destroyed and the third car was badly damaged by fire. The locomotive was slightly damaged, and the first car was somewhat damaged.

The conductor was killed. The train baggageman-flagman was injured.

The weather was cloudy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:47 a. m.

- 8 -

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement over the crossing was 4.1 trains. During the 24-hour period beginning at 12:00 noon, April 16, 1956, 258 automobiles, 131 motor-trucks including 6 carrying oil, 6 buses, and 6 other vehicles passed over the crossing.

Discussion

As No. 321 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the locomotive. The members of the train crew were in various locations in the cars of the train. The speed was approximately 50 miles per hour. The brakes of the train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The headlight was lighted. The enginemen said that the engineer began to sound the grade-crossing whistle signal in the vicinity of the crossing-whistle sign and that he prolonged the signal until the locomotive reached the crossing. The locomotive bell was ringing during this time. The engineer said that after passing the crossing-whistle sign he closed the throttle and made a light application of the brakes preparatory to stopping at the station at Fort Green Springs. As the locomotive was entering the crossing the engineer saw the motor-truck approaching from the west. He immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. He estimated that the speed of the train was approximately 45 miles per hour when the collision occurred.

Two witnesses to the accident were on the south side of the highway when the accident occurred. One of these witnesses was about 50 feet west of the track, and the other was between 200 and 250 feet west of the track. Both said that the crossing-whistle signal was being sounded as the train approached the crossing. Both estimated the speed of the motor-truck as it approached the crossing as about 40 miles per hour. They attempted to attract the attention of the driver and warn him of the approaching train, but the truck passed them without a reduction in speed. One of these witnesses thought that the speed of the truck may have been somewhat reduced immediately before the collision occurred.

As a vehicle approaches the crossing from the west the driver's view of an approaching south-bound train is obstructed by trees located along the north side of the highway and the west side of the track, and by a one-story building located 77 feet north of the highway and 71 feet west of the track. After the vehicle passes a pole line located 50 feet west of the track, the driver has an unobstructed view of an approaching south-bound train.

- 9 -

The driver of the motor-truck was 41 years of age and had been employed in this capacity by the motor carrier since December 12, 1952. The motor carrier had no record of his having made a previous trip over the route used on the day of the accident.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to stop a motor-truck short of a train moving over a rail-highway grade crossing.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of May, 1956.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,

Secretary.