

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3372
SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT AUSTELL, GA., ON
OCTOBER 19, 1950

SUMMARY

Date: October 19, 1950

Railroad: Southern

Location: Austell, Ga.

Kind of accident: Rear-end collision

Trains involved: Freight : Freight : Freight

Train numbers: Second 50 : Third 50 : First 51

Engine numbers: 4890 : 4911 : Diesel-
electric
units 4127A,
6150B and
4168A

Consists: 28 cars, : 49 cars : 62 cars,
caboose : caboose : caboose

Estimated speeds: Standing : 6 m. p. h.: 10 m. p. h.

Operation: Timetable, train orders, and
automatic block-signal and train-
stop systems; yard limits

Track: Single; tangent; 1.14 percent
descending grade northward

Weather: Foggy

Time: 4:02 a. m.

Casualties: 1 killed; 1 injured

Cause: Failure properly to control speed of
following train moving on a siding

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3372

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

SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

December 27, 1950

Accident at Austell, Ga., on October 19, 1950, caused by
failure properly to control the speed of the following
train moving on a siding.

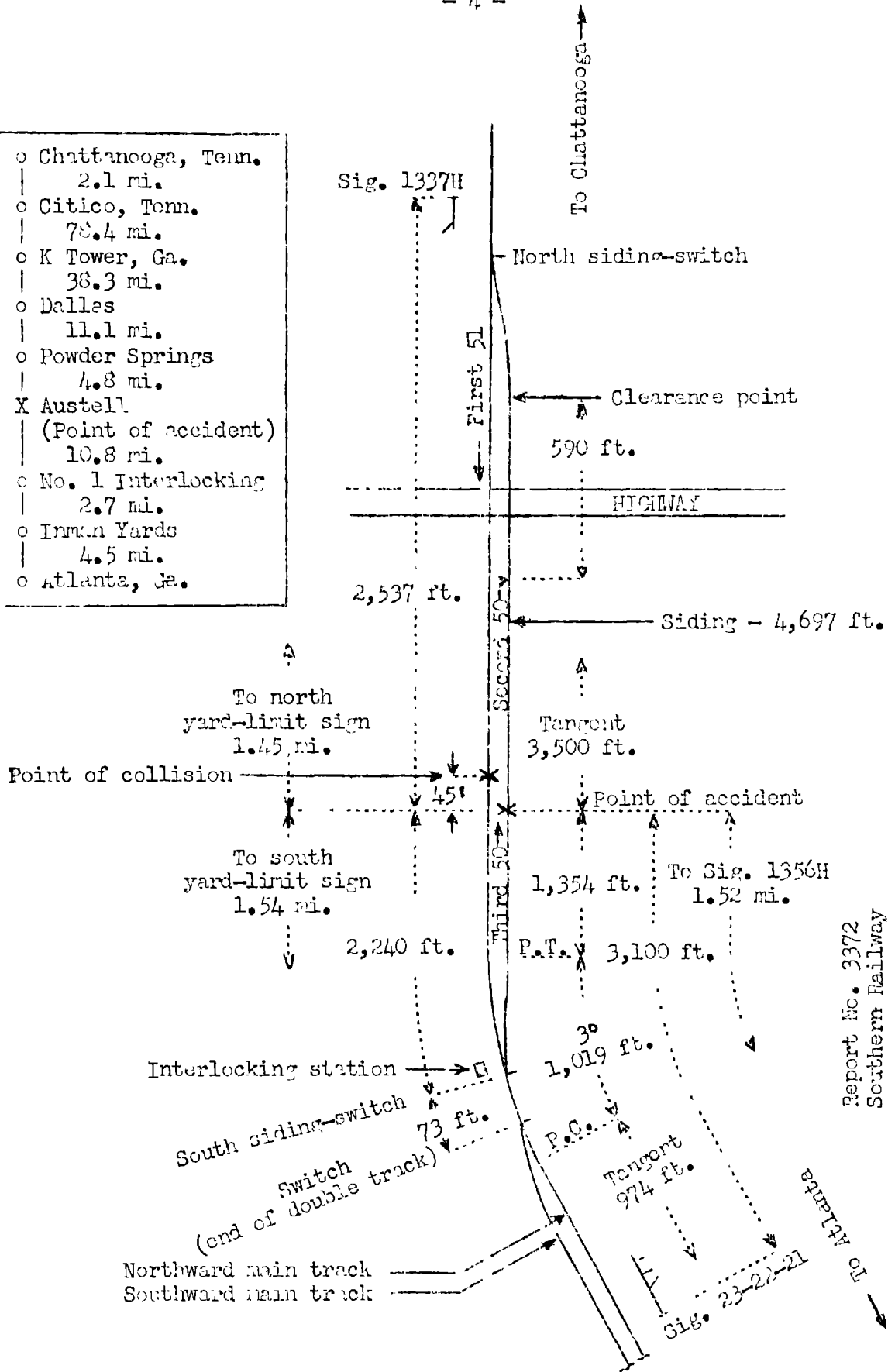
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 19, 1950, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the Southern Railway at Austell, Ga., and a car which was derailed as a result of this collision was struck by a freight train moving on an adjacent track. This accident resulted in the death of one employee and the injury of one employee.

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.

- Chattanooga, Tenn. | 2.1 mi.
- Citico, Tenn. | 78.4 mi.
- K Tower, Ga. | 38.3 mi.
- Dallas | 11.1 mi.
- Powder Springs | 4.8 mi.
- X Austell
| (Point of accident)
| 10.8 mi.
- No. 1 Interlocking | 2.7 mi.
- Inman Yards | 4.5 mi.
- Atlanta, Ga.



Report No. 3372
 Southern Railway
 Austell, Ga.
 October 19, 1950

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Atlanta Division extending between Atlanta, Ga., and Chattanooga, Tenn., 152.7 miles. Between No. 1 Interlocking and Austell, Ga., located, respectively, 7.2 miles and 18 miles north of Atlanta, this is a double-track line, over which trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by signal indications. Between Austell and Coltewah, Tenn., 119.3 miles, it is a single-track line, over which trains are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. The automatic block-signal system is supplemented by an automatic train-stop system. At Austell, a siding 4,697 feet in length parallels the single-track line on the east. The south siding-switch is 73 feet north of the switch at the end of double track, and both of these switches are within interlocking limits. The interlocking station is located west of the track and opposite the south siding-switch. The first collision occurred on the siding and the second collision occurred on the main track within yard limits and 2,240 feet north of the south siding-switch. From the south on the main track there are, in succession, a tangent 974 feet in length, a 3° curve to the right 1,019 feet, and a tangent 1,354 feet to the point of accident and 3,500 feet northward. The grade for north-bound trains is 0.7 percent ascending 3,450 feet, then 1.14 percent descending 1,610 feet to the point of accident. The grade for south-bound trains is, successively, 0.8 percent ascending 1,200 feet, 0.8 percent descending 1,000 feet, and 1.14 percent ascending 540 feet to the point of accident.

Automatic signal 1356H, governing north-bound movements on the northward main track, interlocking signal 23-22-21, governing movements from the northward main track through the routes of Austell interlocking, and automatic signal 1337H, governing south-bound movements on the main track, are located, respectively, 1.52 miles south, 3,100 feet south, and 2,537 feet north of the point of accident. Signal 1356H is of the color-light type and displays three aspects. Signal 23-22-21 is of the three-arm, upper-quadrant, semaphore type and displays six aspects. Signal 1337H is of the one-arm, upper-quadrant, semaphore type and displays three aspects. These signals are continuously lighted. Aspects applicable to this investigation and the corresponding indications and names are as follows:

<u>Signal</u>	<u>Night Aspect</u>	<u>Indication</u>	<u>Name</u>
1356H 1337H	Yellow	PROCEED, PREPARING TO STOP AT NEXT SIGNAL. TRAIN EXCEEDING MEDIUM SPEED MUST AT ONCE REDUCE TO THAT SPEED	APPROACH SIGNAL
23-22-21	Red-over-red-over-yellow	PROCEED AT RESTRICTED SPEED	RESTRICTING SIGNAL

When the route is lined for a movement from the northward main track to the siding, signal 1356H indicates Approach and signal 23-22-21 indicates Proceed at Restricted Speed whether the siding is occupied or unoccupied.

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.

Medium Speed.--One-half authorized speed, at point involved, but not exceeding 30 miles per hour.

Restricted Speed. --Proceed prepared to stop short of another train, obstruction, or switch not properly lined and look out for broken rail, but at a speed not exceeding 15 miles per hour.

105. Unless otherwise provided, trains or engines using a siding or yard track must proceed at yard speed.

* * *

The maximum authorized speeds for freight trains were 60 miles per hour on tangent track, 45 miles per hour on curves, and 15 miles per hour when entering or leaving sidings.

Description of Accident

Second 50, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 4890, 28 cars and a caboose. This train departed from Inman Yards, the last open office, 13.5 miles south of Austell, at 3:18 a. m., 5 hours 18 minutes late, passed signal 1356H, which indicated Approach, passed signal 23-22-21, which indicated Proceed at Restricted Speed, entered the siding at Austell, and stopped about 3:51 a. m., with

the front end 590 feet south of the clearance point at the north end of the siding and the rear end 2,240 feet north of the south siding-switch. About 11 minutes later the rear end was struck by Third 50.

Third 50, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 4911, 49 cars and a caboose. This train departed from Inman Yards at 3:38 a. m., 5 hours 38 minutes late, passed signal 1356H, which indicated Approach, passed signal 23-22-21, which indicated Proceed at Restricted Speed, entered the siding at Austell, and while moving at a speed of about 6 miles per hour it struck the rear end of Second 50.

First 51, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisted of Diesel-electric units 4127A, 6150B and 4168A, coupled in multiple-unit control, 62 cars and a caboose. This train passed K Tower, the last open office, 54.2 miles north of Austell, at 1:59 a. m., 4 hours 39 minutes late, passed signal 1337H, which indicated Approach, and while moving at a speed of about 10 miles per hour it struck the twenty-eighth car of Second 50, which obstructed the main track as a result of the collision between Second 50 and Third 50.

The caboose and the twenty-eighth car of Second 50 were demolished. The twenty-seventh car and the rear truck of the twenty-sixth car were derailed. These cars stopped upright and in line with the track, and were somewhat damaged. The engine and the front truck of the tender of Third 50 were derailed. The engine stopped upright and in line with the track, with its front end 54 feet north of the point of accident. It was somewhat damaged. The tender remained coupled to the engine, and was slightly damaged. The three Diesel-electric units and the front truck of the first car of First 51 were derailed. Separations occurred between the first and the second Diesel-electric units and between the third Diesel-electric unit and the first car. The first Diesel-electric unit stopped 73 feet south of the point of impact and at right angles to the track. It leaned to the south at an angle of about 45 degrees. The second Diesel-electric unit stopped with its front end 43 feet and its rear end 10 feet west of the main track. It leaned slightly to the west. The third Diesel-electric unit stopped with the rear end on the main track. The first and the second units were badly damaged, and the third unit was somewhat damaged. The first car stopped in line with the track and was not damaged.

The flagman of Second 50 was killed, and the conductor of that train was injured.

The weather was foggy at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:02 a. m.

Discussion

On this line trains are operated between Atlanta and Austell by signal indications. Train orders which affect the movement of north-bound freight trains with respect to other trains on the single-track line north of Austell usually are issued to the crews of these trains at Austell. Until a north-bound freight train arrives at Austell, the members of the crew have no instruction concerning their movement with respect to other trains north of Austell or whether their train is to meet another train at Austell.

As Second 50 was approaching Austell, the route was lined for movement from the northward main track to the siding. As the train passed the interlocking station, the crew received copies of train orders Nos. 197 and 107. Train order No. 197 made First and Second 51 superior to Second and Third 50 between K Tower and Austell, and train order No. 107 provided that Second 51 would run late on the schedule of No. 51 from Dallas, 15.9 miles north of Austell, to Austell. Second 50 proceeded northward on the siding to await the arrival of First 51, and stopped with the front end about 590 feet south of the clearance point in order to avoid blocking a rail-highway grade crossing near the north switch. The front brakeman then inspected the front portion of the train. He said that fog restricted his view of the markers on the caboose to a distance of about 800 feet. When he observed the approach of First 51, he returned to the engine. The conductor and the flagman remained in or near the caboose. The enginemen and the front brakeman said that, after the front end of First 51 passed, there was a slight movement of their engine and the brakes of their train became applied in emergency. They were not aware that Third 50 had entered the siding until after the accident occurred. The flagman was killed, and the conductor was too seriously injured to be questioned during this investigation.

As Third 50 was approaching Austell the engineer and the fireman were in their respective positions on the engine, the front brakeman was on the deck of the engine, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had

been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The route was lined for this train to enter the siding behind Second 50. Signal 27-22-21 indicated Proceed at Restricted Speed, and as the train entered the siding the speed was reduced to about 4 miles per hour. When the engine passed the interlocking station the operator delivered to the front brakeman five train orders, including train orders Nos. 197 and 107, and informed the front brakeman orally that First 51 had passed Powder Springs, 4.8 miles north of Austell. The front brakeman immediately handed the train orders to the engineer, who immediately proceeded to read them. When he read train order No. 107, he instructed the fireman to check the schedule time of No. 51 at Powder Springs, and to ascertain whether their train would have time to proceed to that station to meet Second 51. Immediately after the engineer completed reading the train orders, he observed the lighted markers on the caboose of Second 50 a short distance in front of his engine. He initiated an emergency application of the brakes, but the collision occurred before the brake application became effective. The engineer said that while reading the train orders he maintained an intermittent lookout ahead as the train moved through the siding. He said that the fog restricted his range of vision and he thought that the markers of Second 50 would have been visible to him at a distance of about 450 feet if he had maintained a constant lookout. The fireman said that smoke and steam trailing along the left side of the engine obscured his view of the track ahead and he did not observe the rear end of Second 50 before the collision occurred. The front brakeman was on the deck of the engine, and from this position he did not have a view of the track ahead.

As First 51 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the speed was about 10 miles per hour. The engineers were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment at the front of the first Diesel-electric unit, the front brakeman was in the control compartment at the rear of the third Diesel-electric unit, and the conductor and the flagman were in the caboose. The headlight was lighted brightly. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly when used en route. The engineers said that after the first Diesel-electric unit passed the front end of Second 50 they observed the headlight of Third 50. As their train was closely approaching the rear end of Second 50, the headlight was extinguished. Then they observed a freight car on the main track immediately in front of their train. The collision occurred before the fireman could call a warning or the engineer could take action to stop the train.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train moving on a siding.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-seventh day of December, 1950.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.