

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

BUREAU OF SAFETY

ACCIDENT ON THE
SOUTHERN RAILWAY

JACKSON, GA.

NOVEMBER 20, 1935

INVESTIGATION NO. 2021

SUMMARY

Railroad: Southern
Date: November 20, 1935
Location: Jackson, Ga.
Kind of accident: Head-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Section motor car and
trailer
Train number: 50
Engine number: 4831
Consist: 69 cars and caboose
Speed: 30-40 m.p.h. : standing
Track: 6°24' curve; level track
Weather: Clear
Time: 4:45 p.m.
Casualties: 1 killed and 1 injured
Cause: Operation of motor car on time of
over-due train without protection

January 13, 1936.

To the Commission:

On November 20, 1935, there was a head-end collision between a freight train and a section motor car with trailer on the Southern Railway near Jackson, Ga., which resulted in the death of 1 employee and the injury of 1 employee.

Location and method of operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Atlanta Division extending between Constitution and Macon Terminal, Ga., a distance of 83.3 miles, this being a single-track line over which trains are operated by time table, train orders, an automatic block-signal system, and an automatic train-stop system of the intermittent-inductive type. The accident occurred approximately 2 miles north of Jackson; approaching this point from the south, there is a 6°24' curve to the right 533 feet in length and then tangent track for a distance of 1,028 feet, followed by a 6°24' curve to the left 783 feet in length, the accident occurring on this latter curve at a point 64 feet from its northern end. Approaching from the north, there is a 5° curve to the left 532 feet in length, tangent track for a distance of 777 feet, and then the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is level at the point of accident.

The automatic signals are of the upper-quadrant, three-position, semaphore type and are so arranged that when a home signal at one station is passed, the home signal at the next station and all intermediate signals, governing opposing movements, display stop indications. This line also is equipped with indicator lights for the purpose of indicating to operators of motor cars the approach of trains, these lights being located at points between the automatic signals where the view is restricted. The indicator light is an ordinary white bulb attached to the bottom of a cross arm of a telephone pole and remains lighted when the block is clear and is automatically extinguished when the block is obstructed or occupied. An indicator light is located 1,585 feet south of the point of accident.

Due to trees on the inside of the curve, and the fact that the track is laid in a short cut at and north of the point of accident the view was very much restricted; the view had by the crew of the motor car at the point of accident of an approaching north-bound train was restricted to approximately 915 feet. Under the rules, operators of motor cars are required to obtain written line-ups issued by the dispatcher, and to provide flag

Automatic signals →

3,400 ft.

North limit of banking where section force worked. →

P.T.

5°

532 ft.

P.C.

Crossing at which section cars were placed on track.

777 ft.

Direction of motor car. →

Point of accident

P.T.

6°24'

783 ft.

P.C.

1,585 ft.

Indicator light

1,028 ft.

P.T.

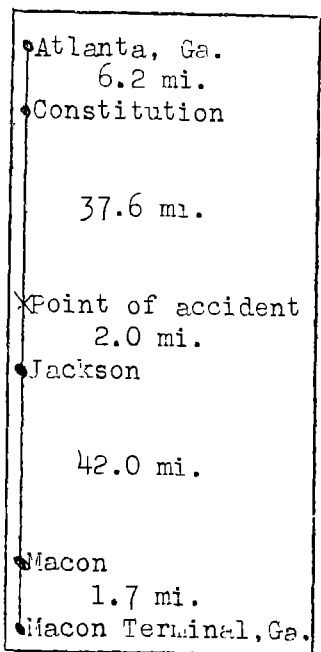
6°24'

533 ft.

P.C.

Direction of train →

Automatic signals →



Inv. No. 2021
Southern Railway
Jackson, Ga.
Nov. 20, 1935

protection around curves where the view is so restricted as to endanger the safe operation of motor cars.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 4:45 p.m.

Description

Train No. 50, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of 69 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 4831, and was in charge of Conductor Bloodworth and Engineman Johnston. This train departed from Macon Terminal, 43.7 miles south of Jackson, at 2:32 p.m., according to the train sheet, 1 hour 32 minutes late, left Juliette, the last open office, 18.5 miles from Jackson, at 3:50 p.m., 1 hour 50 minutes late, and collided with a section motor car and trailer approximately 2 miles north of Jackson while traveling at a speed estimated to have been between 30 and 40 miles per hour.

The motor car involved was a light-duty, steel frame, Fairmont S-2 car and the trailer was a light push car. The section crew, consisting of Foreman Newman, Apprentice Foreman Hinceley and three laborers, after completing their work a short distance north of the point of accident, placed the motor car and trailer on the track, and coupled them together with the motor car south of the trailer. These cars then were pushed northward to a point where some tools had been left, and after loading these tools the cars were pushed southward a short distance where more tools and a water keg were loaded; this consumed about 5 or 6 minutes. The cars then were pushed in order to start the motor and they proceeded southward toward Jackson with Foreman Newman operating the motor but had proceeded only a short distance, approximately 500 feet, when the approaching train was seen. A stop was made as quickly as possible, the trailer uncoupled, and an attempt made to remove the motor car from the track; it was partly off the track, straddling the west rail, when it was struck by Train No. 50.

The motor car was demolished and the trailer considerably damaged. The engine sustained some damage to the pilot and left cylinder, but no part of the train was derailed. The employee killed was the section foreman and the employee injured was the apprentice foreman.

Summary of evidence

Engineman Johnston, of Train No. 50, stated that he was operating his train at a speed between 35 and 40 miles per hour when the fireman called to him to stop. He immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, shut off steam and opened the sanders, but the engine struck the motor car almost immediately after he had been warned by the fireman and the speed was not materially reduced at the time of the accident; the train moved a distance of 20 or 25 car lengths after striking the motor car. Engineman Johnston said he had been maintaining a constant lookout ahead but due to the curve he was unable to see the motor car. He had sounded a long whistle signal for the highway crossing located $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the point of accident and thought this signal could have been heard at the point of accident. On talking with the section laborers after the accident one of them remarked that he had told the foreman a train was coming and that they would not have time to make it, but the foreman ordered the car on the track and they started toward Jackson. The air brakes on the train had been tested before leaving the terminal and they functioned properly en route.

Fireman Echols, of Train No. 50, stated that on rounding the curve on which the accident occurred he saw the motor car and trailer about 10 or 12 car lengths distant and immediately warned the engineman. The men were trying to move the car from the track and they jumped out of the way when the engine was about 50 feet distant. At the point where the engine stopped, he could see a south-bound signal ahead of his train and it then was in stop position, indicating that it was operating properly.

Conductor Bloodworth and Head Brakeman Siegel, of Train No. 50, stated they heard the proper whistle signals sounded at Jackson and for the highway crossing north of Jackson. Conductor Bloodworth also stated that he heard one of the section laborers say he had informed his foreman when they placed the motor car on the track that he heard a whistle and that they could not make it. Conductor Bloodworth estimated the speed of his train to have been about 35 miles per hour at the time of the accident, while Flagman Pace thought it was about 30 miles per hour.

Apprentice Foreman Hencelay, of the motor car, stated that on completing their day's work the motor car and trailer were pushed northward to pick up some tools that had been used earlier in the day and while at that point he observed that the automatic signal governing south-bound trains, located about 3,400 feet farther north, was displaying a clear indication. They then proceeded southward to the point where they had finished their day's work, loaded a water keg and some picks, and started southward, and from this latter point he was unable to

see the south-bound signal above mentioned. About 5 or 6 minutes had been consumed in picking up their tools, and he said they had proceeded a distance of 300 feet or more when the laborers called out that a train was coming; at no time did he hear a signal sounded by the engineman. Apprentice Foreman Hencelay also stated that they did not have a line-up on Train No. 50.

Section Laborers Crawford, Brooks and Woodley stated that when they first saw the approaching train it was about 20 rail lengths distant and the motor car was brought to a stop within a distance of about two rail lengths. They uncoupled the push car from the motor car and had pulled the rear end of the motor car around off the track before it was struck by the train. Laborer Brooks said they were moving at a low rate of speed when they saw the train approaching, and Laborer Crawford stated their speed was not more than 15 miles per hour. They also stated that Foreman Newman did not make any effort to find out if any trains were coming and that no mention was made of Train No. 50, although it always had been his custom when placing a motor car on the track to send a man out to observe the signals or indicators and on this particular occasion they had stopped work at the usual time and there was no necessity for any particular rush. Each laborer denied having made any statement to the effect that he had informed the foreman of the approach of a train at the time the motor car was placed on the track, saying that they did not hear the train at any time, although it is possible to hear a train at Jackson from that point. They also stated that Foreman Newman had obtained a line-up of trains at Jackson about 8 a.m. before leaving for their day's work.

Supervisor Townsend stated that he had frequently instructed Foreman Newman relative to the rules and the operation of motor cars and that he makes safety talks to all the section men on his division every other week, and checks the section crews about every 2 months to ascertain if the rules are being properly observed. Foreman Newman's record was good and he never had had any occasion to reprimand the foreman for violation of the rules.

Supervisor of Safety Heidenreich stated that on April 13, 1935, he was at Jackson and found Assistant Superintendent Langford examining Foreman Newman on the operating rules and he himself later went over all the safety regulations with Foreman Newman, emphasizing the importance of safe operation of motor cars and impressing upon him the necessity of providing protection at all times. He stated that he found Foreman Newman conversant with all of the rules governing the operation of motor and hand cars.

A line-up of trains was issued by the dispatcher on the morning of the accident, copy of which was placed at Jackson at 8:05 a.m. A subsequent line-up was issued at 1:35 p.m., and placed at Jackson, showing that Train No. 50 was called to leave Macon at 2:30 p.m., and it was toward Jackson that Section Foreman Newman was moving at the time of the accident.

Discussion

Apprentice Foreman Hencley stated that at the time they first stopped to pick up tools he could see the south-bound signal, located approximately 3,400 feet farther north, displaying a clear indication, showing that at that time the block was clear. Subsequently, however, they stopped again to load more tools, and it is evident that during this time Train No. 50 entered the block and closely approached the point of accident. The crew of Train No. 50 said that the whistle had been sounded for a road crossing $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles farther south, and although there was evidence that this could have been heard at the point of accident, the apprentice foreman said he did not hear it. It also appeared that Foreman Newman had not obtained a line-up on train movements since 8 a.m., yet he undertook to proceed without flag protection through territory where the view was very much restricted; in addition, there was an indicator light about 2,000 feet south of the point at which the motor car was first placed on the track, but no effort was made to secure the information which its indication afforded.

Conclusion

This accident was caused by the operation of a motor car and trailer on the time of an opposing overdue train without protection.

Respectfully submitted,

W. J. PATTERSON,

Director.