

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3750
SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY
IN RE ACCIDENT
AT COOSA PINES, ALA., ON
MAY 6, 1957

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SUMMARY

Date: May 6, 1957

Railroad: Southern

Location: Coosa Pines, Ala.

Kind of accident: Collision

Equipment involved: Locomotive with cars : Cut of cars

Locomotive number: Diesel-electric unit 2216:

Consists: 24 cars : 34 cars

Estimated speeds: 15-20 m. p. h. : Standing

Operation: Operating rules

Track: Single; 8°30' curve; 0.08 percent ascending grade westward

Weather: Clear

Time: 12:35 a. m.

Casualties: 2 killed; 3 injured

Cause: Failure to secure cars left standing on a track and failure to control speed of locomotive with cars in accordance with rules governing movements within yard limits

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3750

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

SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

June 25, 1957

Accident at Coosa Pines, Ala., on May 6, 1957, caused by failure to secure cars left standing on a track and failure to control the speed of a locomotive with cars in accordance with rules governing movements within yard limits.

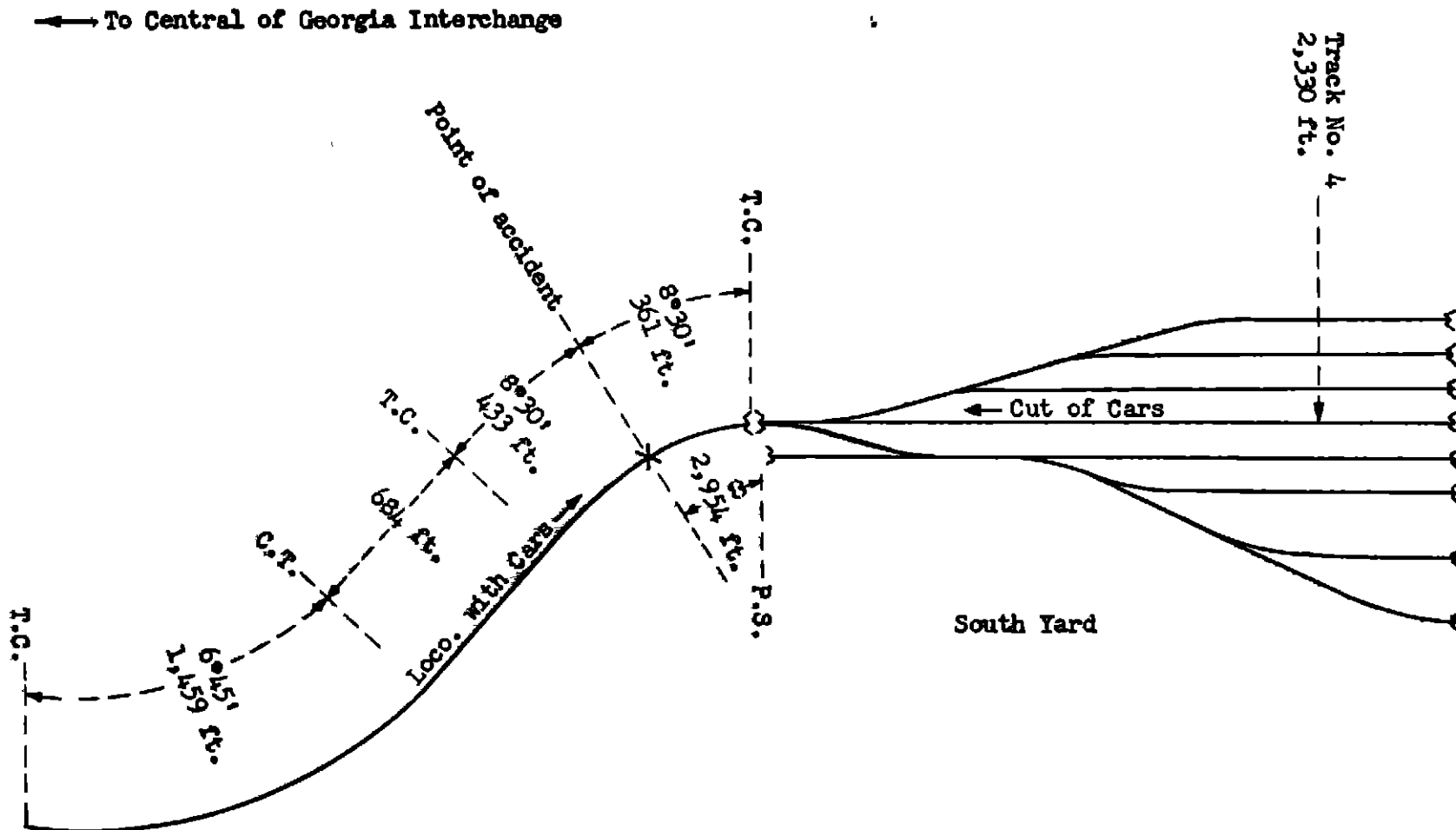
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

TUGGLE, Commissioner:

On May 6, 1957, there was a collision between a locomotive with cars and a cut of cars on the Southern Railway at Coosa Pines, Ala., which resulted in the death of two train-service employees, and the injury of three train-service employees.

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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 Tuggle for consideration and disposition.



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Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred at Coosa Pines, Ala., in a yard which was originally constructed by the United States Government to serve the Alabama Ordnance Works. Certain tracks and facilities in this area have now been leased by the government to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, the Central of Georgia Railway, and the Southern Railway jointly for operation. Each carrier in turn performs the switching service in the yard during a period of 1 year. On August 1, 1956, the Southern Railway took over the operation of the yard.

Within this area a yard designated as South Yard is used for the classification of cars moving to and from the interchange tracks of the connecting carriers and points within the switching area. South Yard is composed of eight tracks designated, from north to south, as tracks Nos. 1 to 8, inclusive. Track No. 4 has a capacity of 45 cars. A lead track extends westward from the west end of this yard to a connection with the Central of Georgia Railway, a distance of approximately 3 miles. The accident occurred on the lead track at a point 2,954 feet west of the west switch of track No. 4. From the east there is an 8°30' curve to the left 361 feet to the point of accident and 433 feet westward. From the west there are, in succession, a 6°45' curve to the left 1,459 feet, a tangent 684 feet, and the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade for west-bound movements is, successively, an average of 0.17 percent descending throughout the length of track No. 4, an average of 0.40 percent descending 2,056 feet, level 400 feet, and 0.08 percent ascending 498 feet to the point of accident.

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. * * *

Second and third class, extra trains and engines must move within yard limits at yard speed * * *

* * *

103(a). Cars or engines standing on tracks must be properly secured * * *

* * *

105. Unless otherwise provided, trains and engines using other than a main track must proceed at yard speed.

* * *

Bulletin special instructions provide that movements at Coosa Pines will be made in accordance with the rules governing movements within yard limits.

Description of Accident

About 12:01 a. m. the crew of locomotive 2216, assigned to yard service at Coosa Pines, placed five loaded cars on the west end of track No. 4 in South Yard. These cars were coupled to the west car of 29 cars which were already on the track. The locomotive then moved westward to the Central of Georgia interchange track. After the locomotive departed, the 34 cars on track No. 4 moved westward on the descending grade and stopped with the west car 2,954 feet west of the west switch of track No. 4. After switching service was performed at the interchange track, the locomotive was coupled to the east end of a cut of 24 cars and moved eastward on the lead track en route to South Yard. While it was moving at an estimated speed of 15 or 20 miles per hour it collided with the cars which had moved off track No. 4.

The locomotive, the first three cars behind the locomotive, and the west car of the cut of 34 cars were derailed. The locomotive stopped with the front end 16 feet east of the point of accident and 22 feet north of the track. The rear end stopped on the track structure. The body of the car behind the locomotive overrode the underframe of the locomotive and struck the control compartment. The other derailed cars stopped in various positions on or near the track. The cut of 34 cars, with the exception of the car which was derailed, were moved eastward a distance of 118 feet by the force of the impact. The locomotive, the car behind the locomotive, and the west car of the cut of 34 cars were heavily damaged. The other derailed cars were slightly damaged.

The two brakemen of the crew of locomotive 2216 were killed. The engineer, the fireman, and the conductor were injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 12:35 a. m.

Diesel-electric unit 2216 is of the switcher type. At the time of the accident the control compartment was at the west end of the unit.

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Discussion

The surviving members of the crew of locomotive 2216 said that when the five cars were placed on track No. 4 it was necessary to move the 29 cars already on that track a distance of about 200 feet in order to clear the switch at the west end of the track. After this was done the locomotive was detached and immediately proceeded westward. These employees did not know whether all of the 29 cars were coupled. The engineer said that the cars at the west end of the track were not in motion at the time the locomotive departed.

As the locomotive with cars was moving eastward on the lead track after switching service at the interchange track had been performed the enginemen were maintaining a lookout ahead from their usual positions in the control compartment. The members of the train crew were also in the control compartment. The headlight was lighted brightly. Normal brake-pipe pressure was being maintained in the cars, but a brake test had not been made. The engineer said that because of curvature of the track and trees along the sides of the track he did not see the standing cars until the locomotive reached a point which he thought was from 90 to 125 feet west of the west car. When he saw the cars he immediately made an emergency application of the brakes. He thought that the speed was between 15 and 20 miles per hour when he made the brake application, and he said that the speed was not appreciably reduced before the collision occurred.

The rules of this carrier provide that when cars are left standing on a track they must be properly secured. The conductor of locomotive 2216, who was regularly assigned at Coosa Pines, said that it had not been considered necessary to apply hand brakes on cars left standing in South Yard, and that for this reason hand brakes were not applied on the cars left standing on track No. 4. Two other conductors who were also assigned at this point said they had never found it necessary to apply hand brakes in order to prevent cars from moving out of South Yard. In the instant case the cars were moved eastward on track No. 4 and were stopped by use of the independent brake. Apparently they began to move on the slight descending grade as a result of slack action after the locomotive was detached.

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The rules also provide that movements in this area must be made at a speed which will permit stopping within one-half the range of vision. The engineer of locomotive 2216 understood this requirement. However, he knew that there were no other locomotives in the vicinity, and since the lead track had been clear at the time he moved from South Yard to the interchange track he expected that it would be clear at the time he returned.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to secure cars left standing on a track and failure to control the speed of a locomotive with cars in accordance with rules governing movements within yard limits.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of June, 1957.

By the Commission, Commissioner Tuggle.

(SEAL)

HAROLD D. McCOY,
Secretary.