

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 2631
THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY
REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT
NEAR OGEMAW, ARK., ON
OCTOBER 3, 1942

SUMMARY

Railroad: St. Louis Southwestern
Date: October 3, 1942
Location: Ogemaw, Ark.
Kind of accident: Rear-end collision
Trains involved: Freight : Freight
Train numbers: Seventh 18 : Extra 781 North
Engine numbers: 807 : 731
Consist: 61 cars, caboose : 22 cars, caboose
Speed: Standing : 30 m. p. h.
Operation: Timetable and train orders
Track: Single; 4° curve; 0.875 percent
ascending grade northward
Weather: Clear
Time: About 5:32 p. m.
Casualties: 1 killed; 3 injured
Cause: Accident caused by failure properly
to control speed of following
train after it had been flagged
Recommendation: That the St. Louis Southwestern
Railway Company establish an
adequate block-signal system on
the line involved in this accident

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 2631

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

THE ST. LOUIS SOUTHWESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY

November 25, 1942.

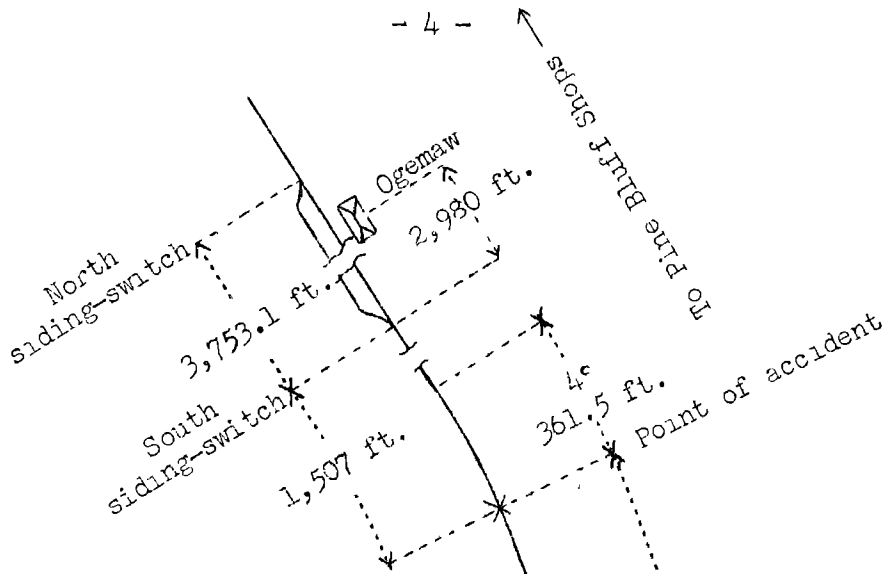
Accident near Ogemaw, Ark., on October 3, 1942, caused by
failure properly to control speed of following train
after it had been flagged.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION¹

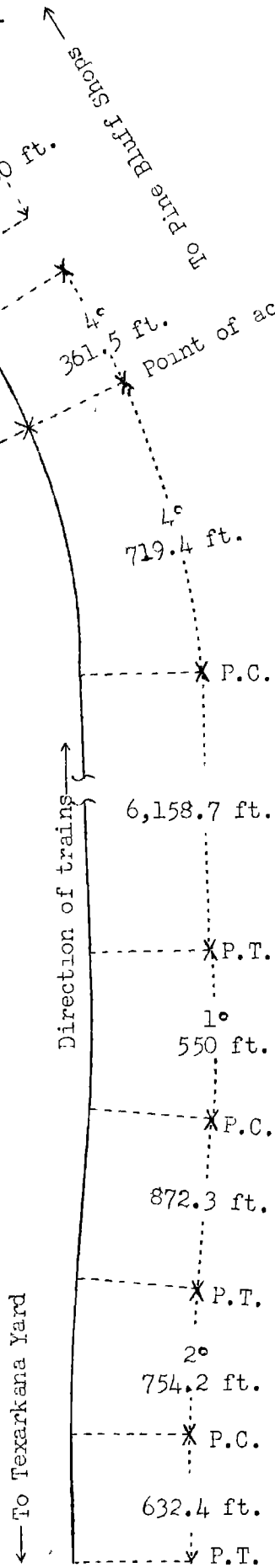
PATTERSON, Commissioner:

On October 3, 1942, there was a rear-end collision between two freight trains on the St. Louis Southwestern Railway near Ogemaw, Ark., which resulted in the death of one train-service employee and the injury of one railroad official and two train-service employees.

¹Under 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.



○	Pine Bluff Shops, Ark.	87.00 mi.
○	Ogemaw	0.85 mi.
✕	Point of accident	13.48 mi.
○	McNeil	21.63 mi.
○	Lewisville, Ark.	29.47 mi.
○	Texarkana Yard, Texas	



Inv. No. 2631
 St. Louis Southwestern Railway
 Ogemaw, Ark.
 October 3, 1942

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division designated as the Pine Bluff Subdivision and extending between Pine Bluff Shops, Ark., and Texarkana Yard, Texas, a distance of 152.43 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. At Ogemaw a siding 3,753.1 feet in length parallels the main track on the west. The south switch of this siding is 2,930 feet south of the station. The accident occurred on the main track 1,507 feet south of the south siding-switch. Approaching from the south there are, in succession, a tangent 632.4 feet in length, a 2° curve to the right 754.2 feet, a tangent 872.3 feet, a 1° curve to the left 550 feet, a tangent 6,158.7 feet and a 4° curve to the left 719.4 feet to the point of accident and 361.5 feet beyond. The grade for north-bound trains varies between 0.91 and 1.0 percent descending throughout a distance of 5,200 feet, which is followed, in succession, by a vertical curve 400 feet, level grade 1,200 feet, a vertical curve 400 feet, a 1-percent ascending grade 1,700 feet and a 0.875-percent ascending grade 720 feet to the point of accident.

Operating rules read in part as follows:

DEFINITIONS

Restricted Speed.--Proceed prepared to stop short of train, obstruction, or anything that may require the speed of a train or engine to be reduced.

11. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee. Train may then proceed at restricted speed.

15. The explosion of two torpedoes is a signal to proceed at restricted speed. The explosion of one torpedo will indicate the same as two, but the use of two is required.

* * *

35. The following signals will be used by flagmen:

Day signals A red flag,
 Torpedoes and
 Fusees.

* * *

99. When a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train, the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection, placing two torpedoes, and when necessary, in addition, displaying lighted fusees.

When recalled and safety to the train will permit, he may return.

* * *

On the line involved the maximum authorized speed for freight trains is 40 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

Seventh 18, a north-bound second-class freight train, consisted of engine 807, 61 loaded cars and a caboose. This train entered the siding at Ogemaw and cleared the main track about 4:42 p. m., according to the statement of the conductor. After a south-bound first-class train passed, Seventh 18 was moved backward to the main track, and attempts were then made to proceed but the train could not be started on the ascending grade. A cut was made between the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth cars and the front portion was moved on the main track to the north siding-switch. The rear portion was left standing on the main track with the caboose 1,507 feet south of the south siding-switch, where it was struck by Extra 781 North.

Extra 781 North, a north-bound freight train, consisted of engine 781, 22 loaded cars and a caboose. At Texarkana Yard, 65.43 miles south of Ogemaw, a terminal air-brake test was made and the brakes functioned properly. This train departed from Lewisville, 35.96 miles south of Ogemaw, at 4:15 p. m., according to the dispatcher's record of movement of trains, departed from McNeil, 14.33 miles south of Ogemaw and the last open office, at 5:15 p. m., and while moving at an estimated speed of 30 miles per hour it collided with the rear end of Seventh 18.

Because of vegetation adjacent to the track and track curvature, the view from the left side of a north-bound engine of a caboose standing at the point where the accident occurred is restricted to a distance of 800 feet.

The caboose of Seventh 18 was derailed and practically demolished. The rear end of the car next ahead of the caboose was crushed inward about 8 feet, the rear truck was torn loose and driven forward, and one wheel of the front truck was derailed. The second car ahead of the caboose was damaged by fire, which broke out after the collision occurred. The engine of Extra 781 North was derailed to the west and stopped, badly damaged, 122 feet north of the point of collision. The tender was derailed and stopped, badly damaged, behind the engine. The first to fifth cars, inclusive, were derailed and badly damaged. The wreckage was confined within a distance of 145 feet.

It was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 5:32 p. m.

The train-service employee killed was the engineer of Extra 781 North. The train-service employees injured were the fireman and the front brakeman of Extra 781 North.

Data

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident, the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 31.8 trains.

Discussion

The rules governing operation on the line involved provide that when a train stops under circumstances in which it may be overtaken by another train the flagman must go back immediately with flagman's signals a sufficient distance to insure full protection. When recalled, he may return if it is safe to do so. He must place torpedoes and leave a lighted fusee if conditions require. The explosion of a torpedo is a signal to proceed prepared to stop short of train or obstruction. A train finding a fusee burning on or near its track must stop and extinguish the fusee and then proceed at restricted speed.

Seventh 18 entered the siding at Ogemaw to clear for a south-bound first-class train. In order to have a more advantageous start for an ascending grade north of Ogemaw, a back-up movement was made through the south siding-switch to the main track. The engine stopped just south of this switch about 5:02 p. m. From this point two unsuccessful attempts to start the train were made, then the engine and first 28 cars were detached and moved on the main track to a point just south of the north switch. The engine returned through the siding to the rear portion of the train, which was moved to the south siding-switch. The engine was detached and moved through the siding to the main track where it was coupled to the front portion of the train. A back-up movement was being made to couple the train together when the caboose, which was standing about 1,500 feet south of the south siding-switch, was struck by Extra 781 North about 5:32 p. m.

The flagman of Seventh 18 stated that he was on his caboose when the back-up movement from the siding to the main track was made. When the movement was completed he immediately proceeded to the rear and placed torpedoes on the east rail about 3,500 feet south of the point where the caboose was struck. Soon after the rear portion of his train was moved northward he proceeded in that direction until he heard Extra 781 North approaching. He immediately proceeded southward and had reached a point about 2,225 feet south of his caboose and was giving stop signals with a lighted fusee when Extra 781, moving at a speed of about 40 miles per hour, passed him. His stop signals were not acknowledged. The engine was working steam and there was no indication that the brakes of the train had been applied. A pumping-station employee saw the flagman proceed to the rear immediately after Seventh 18 moved from the siding and stopped on the main track. About 30 minutes later he heard the explosion of torpedoes, saw Extra 781 approaching and the flagman giving stop signals with a lighted fusee.

As Extra 781 North was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen, the front brakeman and a trainmaster were maintaining a lookout ahead from the engine cab. There was no condition of the engine that obscured their vision or distracted their attention. The brakes had functioned properly at all points where used en route. The trainmaster said that he first observed the flagman of Seventh 18 at a distance of about 4,000 feet, that the flagman was giving stop signals with a red flag and a lighted fusee about 2,200 feet south of the point where the accident occurred, and that torpedoes were exploded about 500 feet north of the point where he first saw the flagman. The trainmaster said he warned the engineer twice, and the fireman and the front brakeman also called a warning, but no action was taken by the engineer. Why the engineer failed to take action could not be determined, as he was killed in the accident. The trainmaster moved the brake valve to emergency position when the engine was about 3,500 feet north of the point of accident; however, the conductor and the flagman of Extra 781 said that their train moved a distance of only about 1,600 feet after the brakes became applied in emergency. The speed was about 50 miles per hour when the emergency application was made and about 30 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The conductor examined the air-brake equipment after the accident occurred and found nothing wrong. If proper action had been taken by either the engineer or the trainmaster when the flagman and flagman's signals were first observed, undoubtedly this accident would have been averted.

On the line involved in this accident trains are operated by timetable and train orders only. If an adequate block system had been in use, this accident would not have occurred.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of the following train after it had been flagged.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company establish an adequate block-signal system on the line involved in this accident.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fifth day of November, 1942.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,
Secretary.