INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

REPORT NO. 3579

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

IN RE ACCIDENT

NEAR DUNLOP, VA., ON

JULY 6, 1954

SUMMARY

Date:	July 6, 1954	
Railroad:	Atlantic Coast Line	
Location:	Dunlop, Va.	
Kind of accident	Rear-end collision	
Equipment involved	Track motor-car	Locomotive with cars
Engine number		Diesel-electric unit 628
Consist		13 cars
Estimated speeds	2 m. p. h.	6 m. p. h.
Operation:	Signal indications	
Tracks:	Double; tangent; 0.56 percent descending grade northward	
Weather	Clear	
Time:	9:25 a. m.	
Casualties.	1 killed	
Cause:	Failure to take precautions necessary to prevent track motor-car from being struck by a locomotive with cars	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

REPORT NO. 3579

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

ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

July 22, 1954

Accident near Dunlop, Va., on July 6, 1954, caused by failure to take precautions necessary to prevent track motor-car from being struck by a locomotive with cars.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

CLARKE, Commissioner:

On July 6, 1954, there was a rear-end collision between a track motor-car and a locomotive with cars on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad near Dunlop, Va., which resulted in the death of one employee.

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[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.

Report No. 3579
Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
Dunlop, Va.
July 6, 1954

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the Northern Division extending between Rocky Mount, N. C., and Richmond, Va., 124.6 miles. In the vicinity of the point of accident this is a double-track line, over which trains are operated in either direction on either track by signal indications supplemented by an intermittent inductive train-stop system. The main tracks are designated from east to west as east track and west track. The accident occurred on the east track at a point 99.7 miles north of Rocky Mount and 2,754 feet south of Dunlop, Va. From the south there are, in succession, a 2°32' curve to the right 937 feet in length, and a tangent 1,435 feet to the point of accident and 997 feet northward. The grade is 0.56 percent descending northward throughout a distance of 2,500 feet immediately south of the point of accident and a considerable distance northward.

Semi-automatic signal LA14, governing north-bound movements on the east track, is located 611 feet south of the point of accident. This signal is of the searchlight type and forms part of a traffic-control system which extends between Dunlop and Collier, Va., 8.7 miles south of Dunlop. The control machine is located at B.X., 5.2 miles south of Dunlop, and is operated by the operator at that point.

This carrier's instructions for the operation of track motor-cars read in part as follows.

> 4. Operators of motor cars must secure line-ups through a telegrapher. At open telegraph stations, they will be secured from the telegrapher on duty at that point, and at other than open telegraph stations, they will be secured from telegrapher on duty at the nearest telegraph station.
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> * * *
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> Possession of line-ups does not relieve motor car operators of the responsibility of safe operation of motor cars * * *

The maximum authorized speeds were 25 miles per hour for the track motor-car involved and 50 miles per hour for the locomotive with cars.

Description of Accident

About 9:15 a. m. a track motor-car occupied by a signal maintainer's helper and a laborer proceeded on the east track from signal LA14 to a point 540 feet north of that signal. About 5 minutes later, while it was being pushed northward by the laborer, it was struck by yard locomotive 628. The accident occurred at a point 611 feet north of signal LA14.

Yard locomotive 628, pulling 13 freight cars, departed north-bound from the yard at Collier about 8:55 a. m., passed signal LA14, which indicated Proceed, and while moving at an estimated speed of 6 miles per hour it struck the track motor-car.

The track motor-car, which was not derailed, stopped 266 feet north of the point of accident. It was slightly damaged. Yard locomotive 628 stopped with the front end 97 feet north of the point of accident. It was not damaged.

The signal maintainer's helper who was on the track motor-car was killed.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 9:25 a. m.

The track motor-car is of the belt-drive type and is powered by a one-cylinder, five to eight horsepower engine. It weighs 625 pounds and has seating capacity for four persons. It is insulated to prevent the shunting of track circuits. At the time of the accident it was not equipped with a top, a windshield, or a rear view mirror.

During the 30-day period preceding the day of the accident the average daily movement in the vicinity of the point of accident was 23.03 trains. In addition to these trains, there were numerous yard movements of which no records were made.

Discussion

On the day of the accident a signal maintainer, a signal maintainer's helper, and a laborer reported for duty at B.X. at 8 a. m. About 8:20 a. m., after the signal maintainer had obtained a line-up of train movements, these employees departed from B.X. on their track motor-car and proceeded to

the signal maintainer's tool house at Dunlop. The helper and the laborer were to renew batteries at signal LA14, and about 8:50 a. m. the helper called the operator at B.X. and requested another line-up. The operator informed him that a yard locomotive would soon leave Collier en route to Dunlop, that No. 376, a north-bound passenger train due at B.X. at 12:25 p. m., was reported on time, and that a north-bound local freight train might be ahead of No. 376. The helper and the laborer then placed the track motor-car on the east track and proceeded from the tool house to signal LA14, a distance of 2,711 feet. They remained at the signal approximately 20 minutes, then returned to a battery case located 540 feet north of the signal and stopped for several minutes while they inspected the batteries at that point. The track motor-car was not removed from the track at either point. The laborer said that as he was locking the battery case the helper called to him that the yard locomotive was approaching and instructed him to hurry so that they could precede the locomotive northward. At this time the helper had already boarded the track motor-car. The laborer returned to the car and pushed it northward in an attempt to start the engine. He said that the engine did not start immediately and he warned the helper several times that the locomotive would overtake them. He said that after he began to push the car the helper did not look southward toward the locomotive nor did he make any attempt to alight from the car. The laborer had pushed the car a distance of approximately 70 feet when it was struck by the locomotive. The helper was killed in the accident, and there is no apparent explanation for his failure to alight from the car before the accident occurred.

As locomotive 628 was approaching the point where the accident occurred the enginemen, the yard conductor, and one yard brakeman were maintaining a lookout ahead from the control compartment of the locomotive. One yard brakeman was on the rear car. Normal brake-pipe pressure was being maintained in the air-brake system of the cars, and the brakes had functioned properly when used. The headlight was lighted dimly, and the bell was ringing. The members of the crew on the locomotive said they first became aware that the track ahead was occupied by a track motor-car when they saw the helper cross the track and board the car. The engineer then made an emergency application of the brakes and sounded a series of warning blasts on the pneumatic horn. The members of the crew estimated that the speed was between 30 and 35 miles per hour when the brakes were applied and between 4 and

7 miles per hour when the collision occurred. Sand which was deposited on the rails when the brakes were applied in emergency indicated that the brake application was made at a point approximately 860 feet south of the point of accident.

Cause

This accident was caused by failure to take precautions necessary to prevent track motor-car from being struck by a locomotive with cars.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-second day of July, 1954.

By the Commission, Commissioner Clarke.

(SEAL)

GEORGE W. LAIRD,

Secretary.