INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON

INVESTIGATION NO. 3131

FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

REPORT IN RE ACCIDENT

AT ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA., ON

SEPTEMBER 29, 1947

SUMMARY

Railroad:	Florida East Coast	
Date:	September 29, 1947	
Location:	St. Augustine, Fla.	
Kind of accident:	Collision	
Equipment involved:	Freight train	: Cut of cars
Train number:	343	:
Engine number:	816	:
Consist:	85 cars, caboose	: 3 cars
Estimated speed:	15 m. p. h.	: Standing
Operation:	Timetable, train orders and automatic block-signal system; yard limits	
Tracks:	Double; tangent; level	
Weather:	Clear	
Time:	2:10 p. m.	
Casualties:	1 killed; 1 injured	
Cause:	Failure properly to control speed of train moving within yard limits and in accordance with signal indications	

INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION

INVESTIGATION NO. 3131

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

FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

October 24, 1947

Accident at St. Augustine, Fla., on September 29, 1947, caused by failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits and in accordance with signal indications.

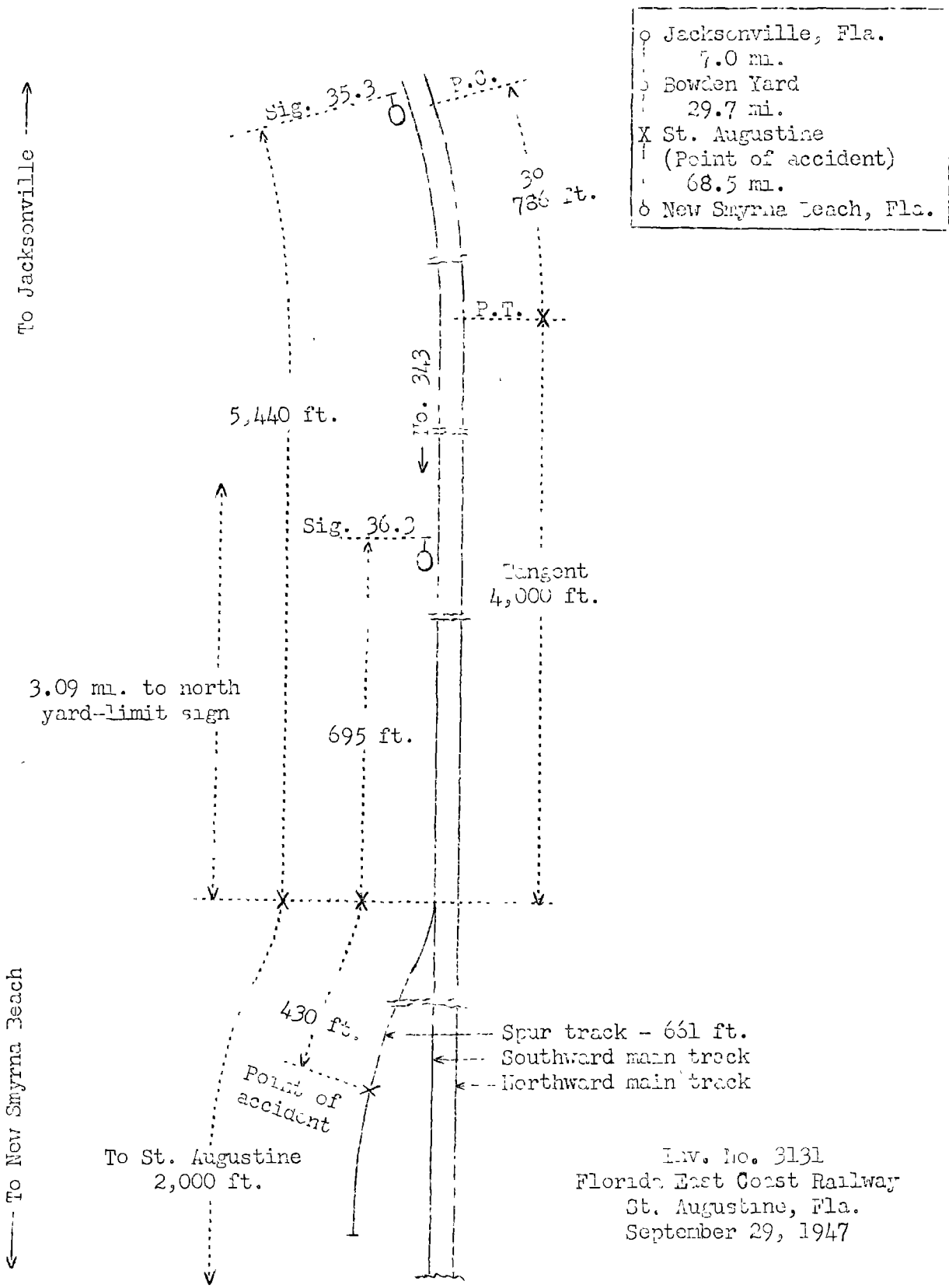
REPORT OF THE COMMISSION[1]

PATTERSON, Commission:

On September 29, 1947, there was a collision between a freight train and cars on an auxiliary track on the Florida East Coast Railway at St. Augustine, Fla., which resulted in the death of one train-service employee, and the injury of one train-service 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.



I.N. No. 3131
Florida East Coast Railway
St. Augustine, Fla.
September 29, 1947

Location of Accident and Method of Operation

This accident occurred on that part of the railroad extending between Jacksonville and New Smyrna Beach, Fla., 103.2 miles, a double-track line. In the vicinity of the point of accident trains moving with the current of traffic are operated by timetable, train orders and an automatic block-signal system. Within yard limits at St. Augustine, 36.7 miles south of Jacksonville, there is a spur track 661 feet in length on the west side of the southward main track. Entry to the spur track is made through a No. 8 turnout. The switch is facing-point for south-bound movements and is 3.09 miles south of the north yard-limit sign and 2,000 feet north of the station. The accident occurred on the spur track 430 feet south of the switch. From the north on the southward main track there is a 3° curve to the right 786 feet in length, and then a tangent 4,000 feet to the spur-track switch and some distance southward. The grade is practically level.

The south end of the spur track is approximately 100 feet distant from the southward main track. At the south end of this track there is a car-stop and an unloading ramp. The turnout of the spur-track switch consists of 90-pound switch points, frogs and rail sections laid on 57 switch ties. The switchstand is of the hand-throw, low-stand type, and is provided with an oil-burning lamp and two targets. The center of the target is 13 inches above the tops of the ties and 6 feet 4-1/4 inches west of the centerline of the southward main track. When the switch is lined normally a green light and a white oval-shape target are displayed at right angles to the track. When the switch is lined for entry to the spur track a red light and a red oval-shape target are displayed at right angles to the track.

Automatic signals 35.3 and 36.3, governing south-bound movements on the southward main track, are, respectively, 5,440 feet and 695 feet north of the spur-track switch. These signals are of the color-light type, and are continuously lighted. The involved aspects and corresponding indications and names are as follows:

Signal	Aspect	Indication	Name
35.3	Yellow	Approach Next Signal Prepared to Stop. A Train Exceeding One-Half Its Maximum Authorized Speed at Point Involved Must at Once Reduce to Not Exceeding That Speed.	Approach Signal.
36.3	Red	Stop; Then Proceed.	Stop and Proceed Signal.

The controlling circuits are so arranged that when the spur-track switch is in other than normal position, signal 35.3 displays approach-next-signal-prepared-to-stop, and signal 36.3 displays stop-then-proceed.

This carrier's 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 the train to be reduced.

Under Control.--To be able to stop within one-half the distance track is seen to be clear.

34. All members of train and engine crews must, when practicable, communicate to each other by its name the indication of all signals affecting the movement of their train.

D-93. * * *

Second and inferior class and extra trains must move within yard limits prepared to stop, unless the main track is seen or known to be clear.

* * *

104. Switches must be left in proper position after having been used. * * *

* * *

All main line switches and those required by rule and special instructions to be locked must be left in that condition.

* * *

809. When a train is stopped by a Stop and Proceed-Signal it may proceed:

* * *

(B) On Two or more tracks, at restricted speed expecting to find train in block, broken rail, switch improperly set, or other obstruction.

The maximum authorized speed for the train involved was 45 miles per hour.

Description of Accident

No. 343, a south-bound second-class freight train, consisting of engine 816, 65 cars and a caboose, departed from Bowden Yard, the last open office, 29.7 miles north of St. Augustine, at 1:15 p. m., 1 hour 25 minutes late, passed the north yard-limit sign at St. Augustine, passed signal 35.3, which displayed approach-next-signal-prepared-to-stop, passed signal 36.3, which displayed stop-then-proceed, and while moving on the southward main track at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour it entered the spur-track switch and collided with the north car of a cut of three cars standing on the spur track.

None of the equipment of No. 343 was derailed. The front end of the engine was somewhat damaged. The force of the impact moved the cars on the spur track southward and against the car-stop and the ramp at the south end, and the cars, the car-stop and the ramp were badly damaged.

The fireman was killed, and the engineer was injured.

The weather was clear at the time of the accident, which occurred about 2:10 p. m.

Discussion

No. 343 was moving within yard limits on the southward main track at an estimated speed of 15 miles per hour when it entered the spur-track switch, which was lined for entry to the spur track, and the engine struck the north end of a cut of cars standing on the spur track. The enginemen jumped from the engine just before the collision occurred, and the fireman was killed.

The investigation disclosed that No. 216, a north-bound freight train, which arrived at St. Augustine about 1:10 p. m., had performed switching service on the southward main track and on the spur track prior to the accident. At the time of the accident, the members of the train crew of this train were engaged in performing switching service on tracks adjacent to the northward main track, and they were not aware that the spur-track switch had not been restored to normal position until after the accident occurred.

The engineer of No. 343 said that the speed of his train was about 40 miles per hour when the engine passed the north yard-limit sign, and that he and the fireman were maintaining a lookout ahead. The front brakeman was in the brakeman's booth on the tender. The enginemen called the approach-next-signal-prepared-to-stop indication displayed by signal 35.3, located 4,745 feet north of signal 36.3, and, when the engine was in the immediate vicinity of signal 35.3, the engineer made a 6-pound brake-pipe reduction. This brake application was not released. When the engine was some distance north of signal 36.3, the speed was about 20 miles per hour, and the enginemen thought that no aspect was being displayed by this signal. The crew held copies of a train order which contained information that several signals located south of signal 36.3 were inoperative, and which authorized No. 343 to pass these signals under control without stopping. The engineer did not reread the train order, and, until his engine was within a distance of about 500 feet north of signal 36.3, he thought this signal was included among the signals specified in the order as being inoperative. Then he observed that signal 36.3 was displaying stop-then-proceed, and he made a further brake-pipe reduction of 10 pounds. The engineer was not aware that the spur-track switch was lined for entry to the spur track until the engine was in the immediate vicinity of the switch, then he moved the brake valve to emergency position. The speed of No. 343 was about 15 miles per hour when the collision occurred. The brakes of this train had been tested and had functioned properly.

The accident occurred within yard limits, and, under the rules, No. 343 was required to be operated so that it could be stopped short of a train or an obstruction.

Cause

It is found that this accident was caused by failure properly to control the speed of a train moving within yard limits and in accordance with signal indications.

Dated at Washington, D. C., this twenty-fourth day of October, 1947.

By the Commission, Commissioner Patterson.

(SEAL)

W. P. BARTEL,

Secretary.