



**The New York Times** <http://nyti.ms/1rQCzFL>

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

# As New Shipping Rules Are Studied, Another Oil Train Derails

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS and TRIP GABRIEL APRIL 30, 2014

In the latest accident involving rail cars carrying crude oil, a CSX train derailed and erupted into black, smoky flames on Wednesday in downtown Lynchburg, Va., forcing scores of people to evacuate and causing a spill in the James River.

Hours later, the Transportation Department said that a long-awaited package of rules aimed at improving the safety of oil transport by rail had been sent Wednesday night to the White House for review.

The proposed regulations were not made public, but they follow Canada's announcement of stiffer regulations last week and are expected to include measures requiring transport companies to replace old tank cars with more robust models that are resistant to puncture.

It was the second train accident involving crude oil for CSX this year.

As smoke billowed into the air, frightened shoppers, office workers and residents evacuated a 20-block area of Lynchburg, a city of 77,000. There were no reported injuries.

Images from the scene uploaded to social media and broadcast by local television showed mangled tracks along the river and three black tankers that slid down the bank into the water.

The Transportation Department said that the agency's Federal Railroad Administration last inspected track in the area where the train derailed on Jan. 8 and did not find any violations or significant defects.

Leaking oil briefly ignited. An eyewitness told WSET-TV in Lynchburg that the flames leapt as high as the 19th floor of the office building where he watched the accident.

Within an hour of the derailment, the smoke and flames had largely subsided. City officials said 13 to 14 cars derailed and three to four cars had ruptured. They were unsure how much oil drained into the river.

The city of Richmond, about 120 miles downstream, was preparing to switch to an alternative water supply in case oil reached it, The Richmond Times-Dispatch reported. The Lynchburg water supply's intake is upstream of the wreck.

"An initial assessment indicates that three of the cars were on fire," CSX said in a brief statement. The company did not say what caused the accident.

The train was traveling from Chicago to Virginia when the derailment occurred at 2:30 p.m.

The company said it sent emergency personnel, environmental workers and community support teams. Federal rail inspectors were also at the scene of the derailment.

Train traffic carrying crude was relatively rare until four years ago, when oil companies in North Dakota began shipping large quantities of Bakken shale crude out of the state by rail because there was insufficient pipeline capacity to do the job.

Now, much of the production of the Bakken region is sent by rail on trains that can stretch up to a mile long and carry roughly 85,000 barrels of oil.

When a runaway train carrying Bakken crude derailed and exploded last July in the Quebec town of Lac-Mégantic, killing 47 people, the safety issues surrounding the transportation of crude through populated areas rose in importance for both American and Canadian regulators.

Then, in December, an oil train passing through Casselton, N.D., derailed and exploded, sending flames high into the air and forcing some residents to evacuate. That followed an accident in November, when another oil train derailed in Alabama, spilling crude oil.

Many of the trains are destined for refineries on the East Coast, which have a strong desire to replace expensive imported crude from the Middle East and Africa with the high-quality, and less expensive, crude from North

Dakota.

In response to the rising concerns, federal regulators and railroads agreed in February to a series of voluntary measures to improve safety, including lower speed limits for oil trains in urban areas, increasing the frequency of track inspections and adding more brakes on trains.

And last week, Canada issued tough new rules requiring emergency plans from railroads on responding to catastrophic accidents and requiring companies to retire older models of tank cars within three years. The new model of tank car, developed in 2011, would effectively set a new standard of safety for rail companies in the United States since many lines cross the United States-Canadian border.

But despite years of discussion, American regulators have lagged on requiring stronger tank cars, which are generally owned by oil companies and private investors, not by railroad companies.

Safety experts have warned for more than 20 years that the older tank cars, called DOT-111s, are prone to rupture in a derailment.

Environmentalists quickly made the case on Wednesday that the accident was another sign of the dangers of oil drilling, even though they are also critical of alternative pipeline transport.

“The accident is a potent reminder of the dangers that come with our dependence on dirty fuels,” the Sierra Club said in a statement, “and the need for better safety measures and increased emergency preparedness.”

Danielle Ivory contributed reporting.

A version of this article appears in print on May 1, 2014, on page B1 of the New York edition with the headline: As New Shipping Rules Are Studied, Another Oil Train Derails.

---

© 2014 The New York Times Company