



Casselton, North Dakota derailment of BNSF, May 6, 2015¹.



Do you live or work in an oil train
blast zone or evacuation zone?
www.explosive-crude-by-rail.org

FACT SHEET: “BOMB” TRAINS and their BLAST ZONE

Oil trains are rolling through two rail corridors, one in **Hawthorn Woods** and the other in **Vernon Hills**. Public health and safety are jeopardized. An explosion resulting from the transport of Bakken crude oil can decimate everything within a **1-mile (radius) blast zone**¹ and comes with up to a **3-mile (radius) evacuation zone**². One fiery explosion in Lac Megantic, Quebec, Canada³ killed **47 unsuspecting citizens**⁴.

Below are some of the hazards and issues related to the transport of crude oil by rail:

- Trains carrying crude oil from the Bakken oil fields of North Dakota to east coast refineries contain **hydrogen sulfide**⁵, a colorless, flammable, and extremely hazardous gas used in production. Hydrogen sulfide **ignites at lower temperatures**⁶. It's explosive when mixed with air and can cause severe corrosion to oil transport equipment. Trains have exploded in America since the early 1940s⁷; the earliest NTSB filing was 1991⁸.
- Exposure to more than **50 parts** of hydrogen sulfide per million milligrams of liquid triggers **shock, convulsions, and coma**; pushed **beyond 700 ppm**, and **death is likely within two breaths**⁹. Enbridge discovered Bakken crude containing **1,200 parts per million** of the gas. Exposure to hydrogen sulfide, *no matter how seemingly insignificant*, can lead to **internal organ failure, infertility, immune system suppression, blood disorders, cancer, birth defects, and genetic mutations**¹⁰.
- Even without derailing, spilling or exploding, doctors have warned that proximity to oil trains poses a **serious risk to the health** with increasing rates in **cancer, asthma and cardiovascular disease** through exposure to particulate matter released as emissions from trains¹¹.
- The older **DOT111**¹² "Ford Pinto" of rail cars makes up approximately **70% of the fleet**¹³ and is considered a "*substantial danger to life, property, and the environment*"¹⁴ according to federal rail safety officials. Train cars are **inadequate for flammable materials**¹⁵ and unable to withstand forces of an accident, **even at slow speeds**¹⁶. Trains are currently allowed to travel at speeds **more than twice** the rated "puncture velocity" of even the new tank cars¹⁷. The **updated CPC-1232s** have not proved safe; they've **failed at least four times**¹⁸ in spite of additional puncture and rollover resistance. The Department of Transportation predicts **10 fiery accidents**¹⁹ a year.
- Local **responders are ill prepared** to handle the increased oil-train traffic and accidents. There's little they can do other than isolate the area, remove people from the area, and allow the incident to burn down to a level where they can extinguish it, which can take up to four days. Local fire departments and fire protection districts across the rail transportation corridor have **inadequate funding** necessary to *plan, train, and equip* their communities for a crude oil incident²⁰. Firefighters involved in the Oregon incident found **foam** used to extinguish the fire **evaporated** due to the intensity of the heat²¹.
- With **Chicago** being the **world's largest rail freight hub**²², it's not surprising that we've had **four freight derailments near our communities**: a January 2014 incident in **Mundelein**²³, a January 2009 incident in **Buffalo Grove**, and two at the same **Northbrook**²⁴ location in November 2009 and July 2012. As in the case of other derailments²⁵, neither the Buffalo Grove nor the Mundelein incident has a report filed with either the **Federal Rail Authority (FRA)** or **National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)**, making it difficult, if not impossible, to determine an accurate assessment of the number of freight train derailments.
- The **derailment in Buffalo Grove**²⁶ occurred beside an ice rink, where *children* practice daily. The cars that derailed carried *molten sulfur*, which also contains hydrogen sulfide. The **2012 incident in Northbrook**²⁷ took the lives of two people when a train derailed as it crossed a bridge, causing the bridge to collapse under its weight. They were *crushed in their car beneath debris until the following day before authorities even realized they were there*. This bridge had been rebuilt the summer before, after a previous 20-car derailment at the same location in

2009 – yet it was left in “crumbling” condition. There are **70,000 to 100,000 rotted, unsafe bridges**²⁸ in the US with **no regulation**²⁹.

- The **only villages** in Illinois represented by elected officials who have fought consistently for tougher oil train rules are **Barrington’s village president, Karen Darch**³⁰, and **Aurora’s mayor, Tom Weisner**³¹. The railroad industry asked state officials to **sign nondisclosure agreements** treating reports as *confidential* and *limiting release* to those with “**a need to know**.” The rail industry said that information could not be released to the public under state-level open records laws because it fell under the category of “**sensitive security information**³².” The oil industry has repeatedly obstructed public access to information the public has a **right** to know; yet, the **federal government** has done little to enforce safety standards³³.
- The rail industry currently allows the use of **only one engineer**³⁴ on freight trains over a mile long and consisting of **100+ cars**, most of which are filled with *highly explosive, toxic hazardous substances*³⁵. Engineers are required to **work long hours**³⁶ managing technology comparable to playing **three video games at once**³⁷. On single-crew trains, an engineer **must walk over a mile** to assess problems at the back. There is **no legal limit to the length** of freight trains³⁸, and most oil trains carry more than **3 million gallons**³⁹ of explosive crude.
- A 1999 state law prohibiting trains from blocking a grade crossing for more than 10 minutes was *thrown out* by the state Supreme Court in 2008. The court said a 1994 federal law gave the U.S. secretary of transportation oversight; therefore, federal authority trumps such restrictions, even though there is no U.S. law limiting blockages that **can cut off police and fire equipment from reaching emergencies**⁴⁰.
- Trains travel on **turn of the century railroads** that were not built to accommodate the weight and frequency of current cargo⁴¹. Chicago’s rail hub has approximately **1,000 trains**⁴², or about **40,000 rail cars**⁴³, passing through daily, which was forecast to **grow 170%** between the years 2004 and 2030⁴⁴. This is **one quarter of the nation’s rail traffic** according to Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Since late 2013, increased transport of crude oil has led to **decreased capacity** to transport grain and to provide commuter services⁴⁵.
- Engineers navigate rail that may have **19 of 24 defective cross ties**⁴⁶ along any 39-foot stretch of lowest grade track, and **half that may be decayed or missing** on the best of tracks, as allowed by federal track safety standards. **Track problems cause 59%** of freight train accidents⁴⁷. Just **3" of movement** between rails (*widened gauge*) can cause derailment⁴⁸. Even if tracks conform to federal standards, they can separate under the force and **sloshing effect** of heavy oil trains⁴⁹.
- President Obama selected as Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration Head, **Cynthia L. Quarterman**⁵⁰, who came from a law firm that **represented the industries** she was appointed to regulate. Current policy allows the rail industry to **regulate itself**⁵¹.
- Although railways have historically received significant subsidies consisting of public tax dollars, even elected officials have been threatened by the privately owned rail industry with the accusation of “**trespassing on rail property**.”⁵² The **FAST Act Transportation Bill**⁵³, a 1,300 pg. bill, has diverted a significant portion of **\$305B taxpayer dollars** to private-sector rail industry for use in funding upgrades, including rail expansion, new locomotives and train cars built with a thermal “blanket” and stronger protective housing around pressure relief valves, rebuilding of bridges, and PTC technology.
- The **CREATE program**⁵⁴ uses Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) to divert public tax dollars for funding privately owned rail and equipment upgrades to improve commuter- and freight-rail reliability in the Chicago area. The majority of rail traffic is freight, which causes the largest amount of damage to rail infrastructure; yet, **private corporations contribute the least funding** under this plan. **PPPs**⁵⁵ are used to **conceal public borrowing**, while providing long-term state guarantees for profits to private companies. Private sector corporations must maximize profits if they are to survive. This is fundamentally incompatible with protecting the environment and ensuring universal access to quality public services.

As a candidate for Lake County Board, one of the issues I'm fighting for is accountability in providing accessible, accurate, and timely information. Trains passing through our communities travel yards from schools, parks, playgrounds, and other public locations, leaving over **25 million**⁵⁶ men, women, and CHILDREN in the United States at risk⁵⁷. Our current county board representative has done nothing to publically address this issue.

Gerri Songer, Candidate
Lake County Board, District 18

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Photo:

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PAID FOR BY: Friends of Gerri Songer Campaign

A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections is (or will be) available on the Board's official website www.elections.il.gov or for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, Illinois.