

Critics: River route no place for oil trains after crash

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — A fiery oil-train derailment in Oregon’s scenic Columbia River Gorge drew immediate reaction from environmentalists who said oil should not be transported by rail, particularly along a river that is a hub of recreation and commerce.

At least 11 cars derailed Friday in the 96-car Union Pacific train and the company said several caught fire. The crash released oil alongside tracks that parallel the Columbia River and sent a plume of black smoke high into the sky that spurred evacuations and road closures.

No injuries were reported. All the cars were carrying Bakken oil, a type of oil that is more flammable than other varieties because it has a higher gas content and vapor pressure and lower flash point.

“Moving oil by rail constantly puts our communities and environment at risk,” said Jared Margolis, an attorney

at the Center for Biological Diversity in Eugene, Oregon.

It wasn’t immediately clear if oil had seeped into the river or what had caused the derailment. Aaron Hunt, a spokesman for the railroad, did not know how fast the train was traveling at the time, but witnesses said it was going slowly as it passed the town of Mosier, Oregon, about 70 miles east of Portland.

Response teams were using a drone to assess the damage, said Katherine Santini, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Forest Service.

Crews were continuing to suppress the fire, which they expected to do overnight. Gov. Kate Brown activated additional state resources including water tenders and the coordination efforts of the Oregon State Fire Marshal to assist firefighters at the scene.

Officials in Mosier closed about 23 miles of Interstate 84 and evacuated the area immediately around the spill, including 50 mobile homes and 200 school children who were picked up by their parents.

Residents in Mosier were issued notices to boil their water until further notice due to a loss of water pressure, potentially allowing harmful bacteria to get into the water supply.

Silas Bleakley was working at his restaurant in Mosier when the train derailed.

“You could feel it through the ground. It was more of a feeling than a noise,” he told The Associated Press as smoke billowed from the tankers.

Bleakley said he went outside, saw the smoke, got in his truck and drove about 2,000 feet to a bridge that crosses the railroad tracks.

There, he said he saw tanker cars “accordioned” across the tracks.

Another witness, Brian Shurton, was watching the train as it passed by the town when he heard a tremendous noise.

“All of a sudden, I heard ‘Bang! Bang! Bang!’ like dominoes,” he told The Associated Press.

He also drove to the overpass and saw the cars flipped

over before a fire started and he called 911.

“The train wasn’t going very fast. It would have been worse if it had been faster,” said Shurton, who runs a wind-surfing business in nearby Hood River.

Matt Lehner, a spokesman from the Federal Railroad Administration, said a team of investigators had arrived at the scene from Vancouver, Washington.

Union Pacific said 11 cars had derailed, but a spokesman from the Oregon Department of Forestry, which helped extinguish the blaze, said 12 cars had been involved. The discrepancy could not immediately be resolved.

Including Friday’s accident, at least 26 oil trains have been involved in major fires or derailments during

the past decade in the U.S. and Canada, according to Associated Press analysis of accident records from the two countries.


The worst was a 2013 derailment that killed 47 people in Lac-Megantic, Quebec. Damage from that accident has been estimated at \$1.2 billion or higher.

At least 12 of the oil trains that derailed over the past decade were carrying crude from the Northern Plains’ Bakken region — fuel that is known for being highly volatile. Of those, eight resulted in fires.

Associated Press Writers Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana; Steven Dubois in Portland, Oregon; Lisa Baumann in Seattle and Alina Hartounian in Phoenix contributed to this report.

PRINEVILLE ART CRAWL
PRINEVILLE - CROOK COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EVERY 2nd FRIDAY, 5:00pm - 8:00pm

Enjoy complimentary refreshments as you stroll through the oldest town in Central Oregon browsing art on display at participating local businesses.



MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER

galerie roger
Roger Peer
541.816.9857

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
and VISITORS CENTER
info@prinevillechamber.com
541.447.6304

The Garden Angel
541-549-2882

- Cleanups
- Irrigation
- Aeration
- De-thatching
- Fertilizing



LCB#9352

BE A CHAMPION FOR ANIMALS, AND HELP END PET HOMELESSNESS.

Saturday, June 11th, 2016
Riverhouse Convention Center

Voted
Best Fundraiser 2015!

Enjoy cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, live & silent auctions, music and dancing, all to benefit the animals.

\$100 per person
\$950 for table of 10

Reservations & Info:
hSCO.org
Call 541.330.7096
John@hSCO.org

Cannot attend but want to be a champion for the animals? Donate today at www.hSCO.org.



Tuxes & Tails
ANIMAL OLYMPICS
HUMANE SOCIETY OF CENTRAL OREGON

THE GALLERY
RESTAURANT AND BAR

Welcome, Rodeo Fans!
Round Up a Hearty Breakfast or Lunch!



Breakfast & lunch
6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Full-service dining in the bar
Back room (21 & over) open and serving until 10 p.m.
Orders to go always welcome. Like

Congratulations!
To our 2016 Sisters Rodeo Ticket Winners!

171 W. Cascade Ave., Sisters • 541-549-2631

4th Annual
Rodeo Sunday
Service



Family Fun
Gospel Music

June 12th
10:00 AM

SISTERS COMMUNITY CHURCH
1300 W. McKenzie HWY | Sisters | Oregon | 541-549-1201
www.SistersChurch.com