

# Railroad in fiery oil train derailment agrees to changes

By **MATTHEW BROWN**  
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — The nation's largest freight railroad has agreed to more thorough inspections and maintenance improvements after a fiery oil train derailment in Oregon and the discovery of more than 800 potential safety violations across its sprawling network.

Details on the agreement between the Federal Railroad Administration and Union Pacific were obtained by The Associated Press.

Sixteen tank cars from a Union Pacific train hauling North Dakota crude through the Columbia River Gorge derailed in early June along a curve in the tracks near Mosier, Oregon. The accident sparked a massive fire that burned for 14 hours and prompted the evacuation of nearby areas.

No one was injured. But federal officials said the railroad wasn't following its own inspection rules to ensure the track was safe. A closer examination of the tracks would have caught a series of broken bolts that allowed the rails to move too far apart where the accident occurred, officials said.

The investigation into the accident is continuing.

## Violations

The more than 800 potential violations against Union Pacific were found as part of a two-year examination of tracks across the U.S. used to haul crude. The violations include some of the same lax inspection problems blamed in the Mosier derailment, federal officials said. Enforcement actions against the company have not been finalized.

Spokeswoman Calli Hite says Union Pacific is committed to making its lines safer and has fixed the problems identified by the government

as potential violations. She characterized the agreement disclosed Friday as the result of a collaborative effort with federal railroad officials.

"All of the issues, the 800 that were noted, have been addressed," she said. "We did everything as soon as we talked to them and knew we needed to do it."

Federal Railroad Administrator Sarah Feinberg said the agreement raises the bar on safety.

"This compliance agreement requires Union Pacific to go above and beyond existing regulations," she said.

## Reliant on trains

The oil industry has become heavily reliant on trains in recent years because of limited pipeline capacity in the booming oil patch of the Northern Plains and the oil sands region of western Canada.

Omaha, Nebraska-based Union Pacific operates more than 32,000 miles of track across 23 states.

The safety measures included in the agreement with the FRA will apply to all track used to haul oil and other hazardous liquids, passengers, explosives, radioactive materials and poisonous gases.

They include an inventory of all curves in the track that are three degrees or greater across that network and walking inspections every 120 days on tracks that have the type of bolts involved in the Mosier accident. Those inspections have to occur every 30 days in that part of the network that includes the Columbia River Gorge.

Previously, Union Pacific said it would voluntarily take some of the same steps within the gorge, a designated national scenic area popular with boaters and windsurfers along the Oregon-Washington border.



## The newsroom staff gathers at the Garden of Surging Waves

From left, reporter Edward Stratton, South County Editor R.J. Marx, Publisher and Editor David Pero, Managing Editor Laura Sellers, reporter Erick Bengel, reporter Lyra Fontaine and photographer Danny Miller. Not pictured: Deputy Managing Editor Derrick DePledge, sports reporter Gary Henley, Office Coordinator Rebecca Herren, Coast Weekend Editor Rebecca Seclak and Editorial Assistant Elleda Wilson.

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