

Flash Point, by definition is, “the temperature to which a fuel must be heated to produce a fuel/air concentration sufficient to ignite when exposed to open flame.” The flash point of crude oil determines its flammability. Crude with a FP above 140°F is Combustible; crude with a flash point below 140°F is Flammable.

Undiluted San Ardo crude, light enough to flow without blending, is transported as a “combustable” because its “Flash Point” is above 140°F. Crude transported from the Alberta tar sands, through our communities, is blended 20-30% with flammable diluents so it’s fluid enough to load into rail cars. (ref. Railway Age, rail industry safety publication www.railwayage.com)

The ignitability of crude blended with flammable diluents is now determined by the most volatile component, turning a combustible product into a flammable liquid.

A regulatory exemption in 49 CFR 173.150f allows a shipper to reclassify and ship a flammable liquid as a less expensive combustible liquid. How safe is transporting a flammable liquid in a combustible liquid tank car? Derailments nearly always result in leakage and a source of ignition, providing all elements necessary for fire and explosion.

Are you in the Blast Zone?

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