"THE MESA REFINERY WATCH GROUP"

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER: June 6, 2016

Union Pacific Crude Oil Train Catastrophe Along the Shore of the Columbia River Gorge

• 16 Tankers Derail Along One of America's Most Renowned Recreation Areas - Residents & Businesses Evacuate

• What Does It Mean To SLO County & California?

The Columbia River Gorge Crude Oil Train Disaster

1. When & Where:
Friday, June 3, 2016, 12:20 PM; less than 1/2 mile from downtown Mosier, Oregon - 69 miles east of Portland, along the Columbia River Gorge.

A Union Pacific train hauling crude oil from Idaho to Tacoma, WA, derailed on a "relatively straight track."

The derailment occurred adjacent to homes, the interstate highway, and the river (see above photo).

2. The Area: The Gorge is unique in its natural beauty and is designated as a National Scenic Area. The town of Mosier is known for its orchards and vineyards.

3. What Happened: The train was pulling 96 tankers of highly volatile Bakken crude oil (crude that's similarly dangerous to diluted tar sands). Sixteen tankers came off the tracks. The cars landed criss-crossed from one another, up and down the rails.

Four tankers spilled their contents and caught fire. Massive plumes of smoke were sent into the sky. The smoke and flames were visible from Mosier.

Nearby woods were set afire. 10 - 15 acres were consumed.

4. The Spill: An oil "sheen" of unknown origin has been detected on the Columbia River (which is home to prized chinook salmon). A containment boom has been deployed.

5. The Train's Speed: The train derailed in a 30 mph zone. "Witnesses said it was going slowly as it passed the town."

6. The Railroad At Fault: A Union Pacific representative acknowledged that tankers on its train were "aflame."

7. How The Fire Was Fought: Firefighters took a defensive stance in the battle. The best course of action was to let the fire burn out.

At least four hours after the derailment, responders had not gone near the burning tankers.

Ultimately, firefighters began hosing down cars not already engulfed in flames to keep them from catching fire. They poured 1,500 gallons of water per minute for 8 - 10 hours on the cars. The water was drawn from the river and water tankers.

The next step was to use foam to extinguish the blaze.

All in all, it took 14 hours, until 2AM, to quell the fire.

8. It Could Have Been Far Worse: Just moments before, the train had passed by the edge of downtown Mosier ... approximately 200 feet from the tracks (see photo). Had the derailment occurred there, local businesses might have gone up in flame.

9. The Impacts As Of One Day Later:

• **Official Status:** Oregon's Governor Kate Brown invoked the state's *"Emergency Conflagration Act"* because the incident exceeded local resources. She said it was "horrific" to have such a disaster in an area as beautiful as the Gorge.

• **School Evacuation:** 200 students in a nearby school were evacuated elsewhere, to be picked up by parents.

• **Other Evacuations:** Citizens were evacuated for a half mile in all directions. Citizens in a one-mile radius were warned to get ready to evacuate. A security detail was established around the evacuated neighborhood.

At least 50 homes plus additional businesses were evacuated. A handwritten note on a local cider mill stated - *"Closed due to 11+ car crude oil Union Pacific train derailment."* The evacuations were still in place 24 hours after the incident occurred.

• **Shelters:** The Red Cross set up emergency shelters.

• **Health Concerns:** Due to the smoke, health officials put out an air quality advisory for people with asthma, respiratory infections, lung or heart disease and diabetes, recommending that they stay inside and limit physical activity.

• **Other Impacts On Businesses:** "Four hours later, black smoke still hung in the sky. A breeze brought the scent of burning crude downtown, where merchants had hoped to welcome tourists to a 'First Friday' celebration that features music and other events. Instead, the closure of Rt. 84 caused vehicles to divert through the town's streets." A retailer complained that her perishable crop of cherries would be ruined.

• **Closing The Interstate:** Drivers on Interstate 84 were witnesses to the accident. Motorists were evacuated for 23 miles, and the highway was shut down for 11 hours. Cars and trucks faced a 15-mile gridlock as they detoured around the area.

- **Sewage Plant Now Non-Operational:** The cars derailed approximately 20 feet from the city's sewage plant and damaged the facility. The treatment plant and sewer lines became non-operational.

- **Water Use Emergency Declared:** Residents were notified of a sewer emergency. It said - "Please do not flush your toilets or run water down sinks or tubs." Residents have been asked not to use bathrooms and other drains into the city's sewage lines. They were told to boil their water.

- **Injuries:** There have been no reported injuries to railroad employees or citizens.

10. Cause Of The Accident: A rail workers' union spokesman said - "When the derailment happened, (the crew) looked back, and saw smoke." Investigators said - the crew was in "normal operations through that area" when they "felt a little bump-tug (and) the train went into emergency."

The rail workers' spokesman - "It could be train handling (i.e., human error) but it could be something mechanical, something wrong with the track, or it could be the wheels. Anything can happen. There are all kinds of possibilities."

11. Track Inspection: An Oregon Department of Transportation rail safety inspector had examined the tracks in late April, finding 30 defects. Deficiencies included loose bolts and braces, but violations were not triggered. Union Pacific officials said they had inspected the track more than six times in recent months.

And, the tanker train had undergone an inspection just before picking up its load of crude.

12. The Rail Cars: According to a U.S. Oil spokeswoman -- the railcars on the train that derailed were all CPC-1232 models. Those are a second-generation standard that are being phased out. A retired state rail safety inspector remarked -- "The cars are not designed for an emergency situation such as this."

13. Scope Of Agencies And Personnel Who Were Forced To Respond:

- Responders came from the states of Oregon and Washington.
- Portland Airport Fire & Rescue sent personnel and equipment from 70 miles away.
- Foam trailers were sent from Pasco, WA (144 miles away), and Redmond, OR (129 miles).
- U.S. Coast Guard helicopters were on the scene.
- Emergency crews are on standby about 30 miles east, with booms, pads, and skimmers.
- BNSF railroad sent emergency breathing apparatus to the Union Pacific accident.
- Union Pacific was sending a hazmat team.
- Oil spill response crews came from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- State Department of Environmental Quality personnel were on site.
- Investigators came from the Federal Railroad Administration.
- National Response Corporation, a contractor that works with Union Pacific, was en route.
- Aircraft, boats and tugboats along the Columbia River responded.
- Fire Departments: Mosier Volunteer Fire Dept.; Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue; Hood River County's Westside Rural Fire Protection District; Wy'East Fire District; Dallesport Fire Dept.

14. Union Pacific's Apology: A UPRR media director said -

"It's very unfortunate. We apologize to the residents of Mosier, the state of Oregon and the broader Pacific Northwest Region for any inconvenience this incident may be causing."

15. A Lack Of Preparedness To Deal With Derailments:
The Seattle Times -- "Ironically, the derailment occurred as the Department of Ecology was holding public hearings on rules to make oil transport by rail in Washington safer."

About a month prior, Union Pacific participated in emergency training with county agencies. "The scenario: an oil train derailment and wild land fire. The training took place at the exact site of the derailment."

16. Pay Attention To A First Responder Who's Now Been There, Done That -- Mosier Fire Chief Calls Shipping Volatile Crude Oil *"Insane"*:

As Per Oregon Public Radio ...

Jim Appleton, the fire chief in Mosier, said he's tried to reassure his town that Union Pacific has a great safety record and that rail accidents are rare. He's changed his mind. Appleton no longer believes shipping oil by rail is safe.

"I hope this becomes the death knell for this mode of shipping (rail) this cargo. I think it's insane."

"I've been hesitant to take a side up to now, but with this incident, shareholder value doesn't outweigh the lives and happiness of our community."

Appleton said Friday was a horrible day for his town. "If the same derailment had happened just 24 hours earlier, there would have been 35 mph gusts blowing the length of the train. The fire very easily could have spread to some or all of the 96 cars behind, because they were in the line of the prevailing wind. That would have been (a) catastrophe."

Appleton said foam was of relatively little use for the first 10 hours. It couldn't be directly applied to the main rail car that was on fire. "The rationale explained by Union Pacific is that the metal is too hot. The foam will land on the white-hot metal and evaporate without any suppression effect. That was an eye-opener."

"Mosier really dodged a bullet in the last 24 hours," he said. "That was a pretty scary incident for the community."*

Other first responders described a chaotic scene, and difficulty getting to the site of the accident due to a massive snarl of traffic on Interstate 84.

"It looked like the apocalypse," said Elizabeth Sanchey, head of (a) hazmat crew. "You get into town, and there is just exhausted firefighters everywhere you look. It was quite scary."

http://goo.gl/ccuXS9
*http://goo.gl/xgnndU

17. What Local People Are Saying About The Columbia River Derailment And Its Impacts:

- **"It was the worst fear, and everyone expected it. It is going to happen eventually when you move so much oil."** - Dana Price, Owner of The Brew Shop.

> ***"This isn't a one-off. It's happening in my town, but next time it'll be someone else's town."***
>
> **- Emily Reed, Mosier City Council President.**

- **"We've been saying for a long time that it's not fair for trains with toxic loads to come into our towns. We don't have the capacity to fight these fires. "(Thankfully) it's not a windy day and the ground is not brittle and dry."** - Arlene Burns, Mayor of Mosier.

- **"All of a sudden, I heard 'Bang! Bang! Bang!' like dominoes. The train wasn't going very fast. It would have been worse if it had been faster."**
  - Brian Schurton, owner of a windsurfing business.

- **"You could feel it (the accident occurring) through the ground. It was more of a feeling than a noise." He said he saw tanker cars "accordioned" across the tracks.**
  - Silas Bleakley, local restaurant worker.

- **"People were afraid of something like this happening. I think this could lead to a lot of people who weren't necessarily listened to before being listened to now. You live (here) for the way of life and when something like this happens, it takes the joy out of it."**
  - Derek Hiser, Mosier City Council member.

- **"It's too soon to say what the damage is. We are still figuring out how we are going to deal with this."** - Lisa Copeland, Spill Communication Mgr., Washington Dept. of Ecology.

- **"I looked outside and there was black and white smoke blowing across the sky, and I could hear the flames. A sheriff's official in an SUV told me to get the hell out."**
  - Mosier resident Dan Hoffman.

What Does This Disaster Mean To SLO County & California?

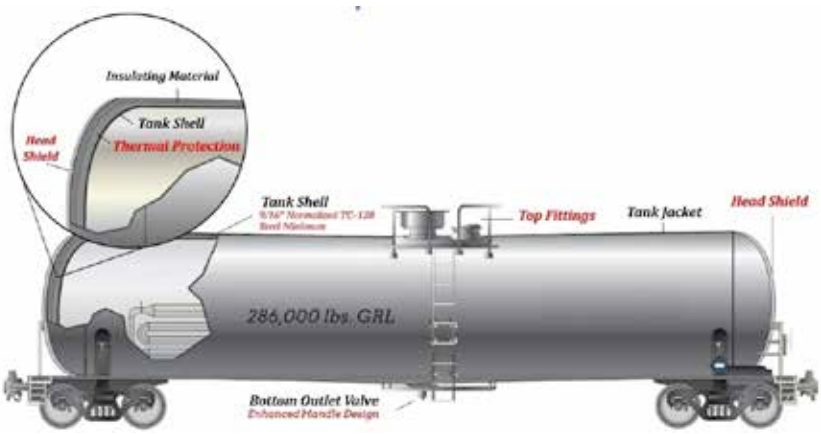
Given that Phillips 66 intends to bring thousands of crude oil tankers each year through California and SLO County on the Union Pacific railroad, what can we learn from the Columbia River Gorge derailment?

1. Crude Oil Train Disasters Are Not A Myth: Despite what P66 supporters would have us believe, serious crude oil train accidents actually occur!

It's all a matter of "numbers" -- vastly more crude oil trains means far more derailments, spills, fires, and damage.

2. Claims Of "Safe Track Records" Are Worthless: P66 and Union Pacific would have us think their prior safety records are a guarantee for the future. Think again. They both have very little experience with crude oil trains and lack the proper tankers or railroad tracks. The Mosier accident, courtesy of Union Pacific, proves the point.

3. Even Upgraded Tankers Are Vulnerable:



The Mosier accident featured rail tankers currently acceptable to the U.S. federal government (CPC-1232s) ... yet they failed to stop the crude from spilling!

Even the next generation of cars (DOT-117Rs which would be used by P66) have serious flaws - they're designed only for accidents occurring at slower speeds and to survive only in fires of less than two hours. (The Mosier fire was 14 hours.)

4. Trains At Slow Speeds Also Topple Over: The train in the Mosier accident was in a 30 mph zone and was observed traveling relatively slowly. Yet that didn't prevent it from toppling over, spilling its cargo and bursting into flames. So even slower speeds in SLO County won't make a difference, especially on steeper descents such as the Cuesta Grade.

5. An Extraordinary Number Of Citizens Would Be Placed In Danger: The Mosier derailment occurred in a relatively rural spot -- "only" 50 homes were nearby. In SLO County -- hundreds or thousands of people in residences, businesses, schools, hospitals, etc., would be in the DOT evacuation and impact zones.

6. Businesses Are Severely Impacted: Citizens are not the only ones affected. Businesses are hit with the outcomes, often even longer term, as tourists and potential new residents shy away from the region.

7. SLO County's Reputation Would Be Degraded: Similar to Columbia River Gorge towns, SLO County's towns depend heavily on tourism. Crude oil trains, with their pollution and potential for derailments, will damage our region's reputation as a pristine place for outdoor recreation.

8. Towns Are Unprepared For These Disasters: As mentioned above, the Oregon governor stated that Mosier wasn't prepared to handle the impacts. The same is true of SLO County. Resources would have to be brought in from hundreds of miles away, even as the fire is left to burn out.

9. A Myriad Of Impacts From Every Accident: What resulted from the Mosier accident? Impacts involve water usage, sewage treatment, waterways, air quality, health concerns, oil spills, toxic smoke, residential evacuations, security forces called out, schools closed, businesses closed, shelters activated, major roadways closed. SLO County is just as vulnerable.

10. SLO County Officials - They Must Get Their Priorities Straight: As County officials deliberate the P66 rail project, they must live up to their sworn responsibilities to put the health and safety of citizens first.

Telling us "commerce" is desirable, "there's nothing wrong with profits", that we use fossil fuels so we must swallow the dangers of crude-by-rail, and that deaths have occurred but we must accept that ... is looking at the issue solely through the lens of P66's special interests.

If that's the case, then we can look forward to the names "Mosier", "Lac Megantic", "Casselton", "Lynchburg", etc., being replaced by "Pismo Beach", "Paso Robles", or "San Luis Obispo."

BE SURE TO LET SLO COUNTY OFFICIALS KNOW HOW YOU FEEL!

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Mesa Refinery Watch Group Steering Committee: Contact one or more of our members with your comments or to learn about upcoming committee meetings.

- Linda Reynolds (Founder): lreynolds151@gmail.com
- Eunice King (Chief Administrator): MRWCoord@gmail.com
- Martin Akel: akelassoc@earthlink.net
- John Anderson: johnanderson33@hotmail.com
- Kevin Beauchamp: kevin.beauchamp@kw.co
- Steve DuBow: sfdubow@charter.net
- Gayle Hurlburt (MRWG Website Administrator)
- Gary McKible: gary@mckible.com
- Mike Nelson: miken0105@gmail.com
- Tom Ryan: whitneyhiker888@yahoo.com
- Sam Saltoun: ssaltoun@verizon.net
- Laurance Shinderman: lshinderman@sbcglobal.net

List Coordinator/Newsletter Distributor: If you would like to add names for receipt of this newsletter, or if you would like to stop receiving it, kindly contact Steve Dubow -- sfdubow@charter.net.