



## Citizens Acting for Rail Safety

### **MEDIA ALERT**

**April 27, 2016 for Immediate Release**

#### **Freight Rail Demand is Increasing: Rail Carriers Don't Provide Hazardous Rail Shipments Data to Emergency Planners/First Responders, Additional State Rail Inspectors Needed**

Over 325,000 Minnesotans live near the 700 miles of rail track that are used to haul Bakken oil. Besides the 700 miles of track used to haul oil, an additional 3,700 miles of freight-track exist in Minnesota. These tracks carry important state and national commodities, some of which are hazardous such as ethanol, propane and anhydrous ammonia. More than 3 million Minnesotans live in these freight rail communities. Rail safety is a far-reaching public safety concern in Minnesota.

In January of 2015, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety released a report on Minnesota's preparedness for an oil transportation incident. The report identified weaknesses and made suggestions for improvement in the Minnesota system. One of the report recommendations is to improve the connections between first responders, private companies (rail carriers) and state agencies. Emergency planners and first responders recently testified before the Minnesota legislature about the lack of necessary information being shared by the rail carriers. State Representative Frank Hornstein recently introduced a bill that provides a meaningful step toward fixing this. Specifically House File 3698 facilitates the exchange of pertinent information between rail carriers and emergency managers to proactively develop emergency response plans ahead of a disaster. Further the bill ensures the sharing of necessary information between rail carriers and first responders real-time at the occurrence of a rail incident. House File 3698 and its companion bill Senate File 3352 serve to codify the currently unmet commitment of rail carriers to provide the appropriate and adequate information to agency officials.

The Association of American Railroads reports a 45% accident reduction rate since 2000. Upon closer look at their statistics the accident reduction rate has been generally flat since 2012. Given the improved technology and spending on infrastructure reported by the Association of American Railroads, one would reasonably expect an ongoing reduction in accidents, but that has not been the case. At a time when rail accident reduction rates have stalled and when freight rail shipments are predicted to increase by 25-45% in the next 15 years, additional state rail inspectors seem a prudent measure to improve rail safety and HF3698/SF 3352 provides for an increase in state rail inspectors.

As a result of the glut of oil on the market and the continued production from the Bakken fields, there is a new practice of storing full oil tank cars on rail track and in rail yards. This phenomenon warrants additional eyes on the ground and additional state rail inspectors can help.

The merits of the HF3698/SF3352 rail safety legislation and its capacity to improve public safety make it worthy of becoming Minnesota law. The bill provides a reasonable balance between the information-sharing requests of emergency planners and first responders, while addressing industry's concerns about proprietary information. If the bill does not advance in this legislative session, the people of Minnesota, our emergency planners and first responders will have to wait another year in hopes of the protection and support they deserve. There is concern that the benefits of this rail safety legislation will be whittled away during the Minnesota legislative conference committee negotiations. Further, rail carriers are pitting this rail safety bill against a separate legislative initiative that requires the rail carriers to address the safety concerns of the numerous at-grade rail crossings in Minnesota. Please encourage your Minnesota State House Representative and Senator to support HF3698/SF3352.

**Highly volatile oil, ethanol and other hazardous materials + unsafe tank cars  
+ lack of information transparency + inadequate government regulations  
= danger for our communities**

### **About Citizens Acting for Rail Safety (CARS)**

CARS is a regional, grassroots advocacy group that works with the public and legislators to improve rail transportation systems for the benefit of the health, safety, and quality-of-life of people, wildlife, and the environment.

### **Resources**

CARS website: [www.saferails.org](http://www.saferails.org)

CARS facebook: [facebook.com/saferailstwincities](https://www.facebook.com/saferailstwincities)

Minnesota's Preparedness for an Oil Transportation Incident: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/planning-preparedness/Documents/mn-preparedness-oil-transportation-incident-report.pdf>

[Other links?]