



KANSAS CHAPTER of the SIERRA CLUB

Before the Senate Transportation Committee
Written Testimony of Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Proponent to SB 164
February 19th, 2015

Chairman Petersen and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong support of SB 164; which requires freight trains to be operated by at least two crew members.

Recent disasters involving oil trains highlights a growing problem

This past Monday, a 106-car freight train carrying about 3 millions of gallons of crude oil derailed in Fayette County, West Virginia. Some twenty tank cars exploded into huge fireballs, including one that ignited a nearby home, while another landed in the tributary of the Kanawha River. Fortunately, no human life was lost, but some 6000 locals were without water following a water treatment plant shut-down because of oil contamination upstream.

However, less than two years ago, 47 people were killed in an oil-train disaster in Quebec in July 2013. That derailment spilled 1.6 million gallons of oil, 26,000 gallons of which drained into Chaudiere River. The disaster is estimated to cost \$2.7 billion in town repairs, but \$200 million alone in clean-up costs to remediate some 12.3 million gallons of contaminated water according to federal agency data.

Oil Trains problems cost us dearly; they damage our environment and are expensive to clean up

These latest rail accidents are part of a growing trend of derailments of oil trains across the United States and Canada. Since July 2013, 11 major oil-train derailments have occurred, as more freight trains are transporting crude oil than ever before due to all-time highs in domestic oil production, especially from the North Dakota Bakken. It is estimated that 10% of US Crude now moves by rail, amounting to 15,000 carloads per week and 1.5 million barrels a day, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In 2013, crude oil by rail was roughly 45 times greater than that in 2008.

In 2013, over a million gallons of oil were spilled during U.S. rail incidents, a total greater than the previous 40 years combined! The US Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration calculates that an oil-train explosion can cost more than \$300 per gallon in property remediation. When these oil trains often carry more 100 cars, each containing 30,000 gallons at a time, the associated costs and danger from a derailment is pretty high. To give you context, there were 141 spills logged in 2014. These spills involving crude oil often leak into water bodies, which can contaminate water with known-carcinogenic toxins like benzene and cause severe respiratory problems



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if inhaled during ignition. Moreover, these oil train explosions cause significant environmental damage and devastate the surrounding natural ecosystems.

Problems with Oil Trains require more onboard supervision

To benefit the overall security of freight transportation by rail, especially concerning trains carrying crude oil, we support today's legislation requiring at least two operators. We feel that the more eyes and ears monitoring the ongoing safety of the train, the better the odds in preventing mishaps and thus reduce the chance for a derailment and avoid human and environmental disaster. Even if a derailment were to happen, an additional operator could mean the difference in the severity of the damage.

Pass SB 164 for increased safety and security among freight trains

Lawmakers, thank you for your leadership and public service to Kansas. Now please take leadership today in enhancing our state's safety by passing SB 164 and adding much-needed safeguards on potentially disastrous freight transportation.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Zack Pistora | Legislative Director and State Lobbyist, Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club

zack@kansas.sierraclub.org | 785-865-6503

The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enjoying our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for more than forty years now.