

Derailed train spills oil into Columbia River

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An oil-train derailment and fire has damaged essential city services in a small OR town, authorities said Sunday. "The escalation of oil trains in the Gorge and throughout the Pacific Northwest has been opposed by many city governments, faith communities, tribal councils and community organizations precisely for the reasons we are experiencing today as a result of the Mosier derailment". About a hundred people were evacuated from a nearby mobile home park by the train derailment and fire that sent plumes of black smoke into the sky near the scenic Columbia River Gorge.

"Moving oil by rail constantly puts our communities and environment at risk", said Jared Margolis, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity in Eugene, Oregon.

Spokesman Justin Jacobs said Saturday the track near Mosier, about 70 miles east of Portland, had been inspected at least six times since March 21.

Response teams were using a drone to assess the damage, said Katherine Santini, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Forest Service. As emergency responders descended on the crash site, Interstate 84 was closed and residents were ordered to leave the area. On Sunday morning, almost 100 Mosier residents were still under evacuation orders and crews reported they had contained a "light oil sheen" in the Columbia River.

Silas Bleakley was working at his restaurant in Mosier when the train derailed.

Given that this particular train derailed at such a point to avoid hitting homes or spilling much larger amounts into local waterways-which led the Mosier fire chief Jim Appleton to say the community actually "dodged a bullet"-Eric de Place, policy director at the Sightline Institute, a progressive Seattle think tank, told *The Oregonian* newspaper there was no reason to think that other areas would experience such "luck" next time".

Another witness, Brian Shurton, was watching the train as it passed by the town when he heard a tremendous noise. 4 of those cars caught fire.

The Transportation Department says operations Saturday will include removing rail cars from the site. The discrepancy could not immediately be resolved.

Since 2008, there have been at least 10 major oil-train derailments across the United States and Canada, including a disaster that killed 47 people in a Quebec town in July 2013. The booms are meant to contain any oil that may seep into the river from a Union Pacific oil train that derailed near Mosier, Ore., on Friday.

Of those, eight resulted in fires.

Since last spring, North Dakota regulators have required companies to treat oil before it's shipped by rail to make it less combustible.

"This is the type of accident we work to prevent every day".

It was most recently inspected Tuesday, and within the past month, the company had also checked for imperfections and inspected the ground along the track. Crews had been waiting for the cars to cool before transferring the oil into tank trucks.

Sitting next to his 7-year-old son as he spoke with the newspaper, de Place said he was in a "blind rage" about the fiery crash in Mosier.

Some have criticized the upgraded model as not safe enough to transport volatile Bakken oil.