



PRESS RELEASE

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House Votes to Protect Communities from Oil Train Disasters

HB 3225 gives Oregon State Fire Marshall authority and tools to develop response plans

Responding to the 347% increase in the transport of oil by rail through the state since 2005, the Oregon House today passed legislation that will provide centralized preparedness and response planning through the State Fire Marshall's office for any potential oil-by-rail incident.

Trains carrying crude oil and other hazardous materials move widely throughout Oregon, through 15 counties, 35 legislative districts, 80 fire districts and 10 of the state's 13 Hazardous Material Response Team regions. Currently, the Oregon State Fire Marshal has insufficient authority and funding to coordinate the response to a rail incident involving the transport of crude oil and other hazardous materials by rail, putting communities across the state at risk.

In response to the potential for disaster, House Bill 3225 authorizes the Oregon State Fire Marshal to coordinate contingency planning and training in preparation for an incident involving the transport of crude oil by rail. The bill passed unanimously.

"This bill will make families safer in communities all across Oregon," said Rep. Barbara Smith Warner (D-Portland), who carried the bill. "Empowering the Fire Marshall to create a proactive, comprehensive plan for any potential future train incident involving hazardous materials is a big step forward, and will help ensure that Oregon's first responders have the tools, training, and coordination they need to keep our communities safe if disaster should strike."

Under this bill, the Fire Marshal will adopt a plan to address incidents that occur during the transport of hazardous materials by rail, to provide ongoing training for state and local first responders, and to establish the location and coordination of response materials across the state. HB 3225 will also require the Fire Marshal to report to the Legislature regarding an inventory of the items and location of all emergency response resources available in the state; any possible revisions to the response roles of state agencies, local governments and railroads; and strategies to fund maintenance, training, and administration of critical response plans.

The Oil and Hazardous Material Transparency by Rail Action Fund, also established by HB 3225, will enable the Oregon State Fire Marshal to collect funds for the costs of responding to incidents of hazardous materials incidents by rail.

The bill is the result of collaboration between first responder agencies, local communities, and railroad operators.

HB 3225 now goes to the Senate.

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