

Improving Track Maintenance is the Key to Oil Train Safety

Track conditions are a leading cause of train derailments in the U.S., accounting for approximately one-third of all train accidents, according to data published by the Federal Railroad Administration. Agency statistics confirm 1,220 reportable train derailments occurred in 2014, resulting in nearly \$200 million in repair/replacement costs for damaged track and equipment alone, as well as cost to human lives, property, and the environment. Of these derailments, a full 39% (475) were determined to be track caused.

"The key to reducing the frequency of oil train derailments plaguing North America is improved track maintenance," says Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division President Freddie Simpson. "By every measure, track caused accidents are the most prevalent and the most preventable," said Simpson. "Of ... mainline accidents, 329 were classified as derailments and an astounding 47% (155) of these were reported by the railroads themselves to be track caused. The key to reducing track caused derailments is maintaining the

tracks to a higher safety standard. Unfortunately, the railroads' own statistics speak for themselves and track caused derailments—including those involving highly volatile crude oil—continue to be a threat to the nation. We can significantly improve railroad safety by improving the quality of the track. The technology, the skilled workers, and the higher track standards already exist; this is not rocket science," said Simpson.

Transporting crude oil on U.S. railroads grew from just 9,500 carloads in 2008 to more than 400,000 carloads in 2013. "The wear and tear on the track structure, coupled with the volatility of the commodities being transported, requires additional track maintenance to stay ahead of the rate of track degradation. BMWED has been actively pursuing common sense track safety improvements for years; however, the industry arrogantly claims they cannot afford to maintain the tracks to a higher safety standard," said Simpson. "My question to the nation is, can we afford for them not to?"