

Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act of 2016

Summary

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

The *Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act of 2016* reduces risks posed by trains carrying large quantities of crude oil, ethanol, and other flammable liquids. **It gets the most dangerous cars off the tracks, puts safer cars on the tracks, and provides funding to communities at risk for these disasters. It is the House Companion to Senator Wyden's S. 1175, the Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act of 2015.**

The bill establishes a fee on DOT-111 tank cars used to transport crude oil, ethanol, or other flammable liquids. The per-car fee starts at \$175 per shipment and increases annually. Funds from the fee are used to reduce risks to communities by training first responders, hiring state railroad inspectors, and relocating tracks that carry large volumes of flammable liquids or gases.

The fee would pay for:

- Clean-up costs stemming from railroad accidents involving Class 3 flammable liquids, including crude oil and ethanol;
- Preparedness and training grants totaling \$45 million over three years for first responders in communities through which large quantities of crude oil, ethanol, liquefied natural gas or other flammable liquids are transported by rail;
- Grants of \$100 million over four years to reroute railroad tracks handling large volumes of flammable liquids, and help states hire additional railroad inspectors;
- A tax credit available to companies that retrofit tank cars to the standard established by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The legislation also requires:

- Implementation of National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations requiring railroads to establish education programs for communities along hazardous materials routes; improve information made available to emergency workers responding to railroad accidents involving hazardous materials; and strengthen track inspection standards;
- The Energy Information Administration to publish data regarding railroad shipments of flammable energy products, including crude oil, ethanol, and liquefied natural gas;
- The DOT to conduct a study examining national, regional, and local first responder preparedness for railroad accidents involving large volumes of flammable liquids;
- The DOT to study whether longer freight trains pose greater risks to public health and safety;
- The Census Bureau to report the types of rail tank cars used to transport flammable liquids in each of its 2017, 2022, and 2027 censuses.