

Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act of 2015

The *Hazardous Materials Rail Transportation Safety Improvement Act of 2015* 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, gets safer cars on the tracks, and provides funding to communities at risk for these disasters.**

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 upgrade CPC-1232 cars in 2016, 2017 or 2018 to the standard established in the forthcoming DOT rule

The legislation also requires:

- Implementation of outstanding 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 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

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) **first warned in 1991** that DOT-111 tank cars are inadequate for transporting hazardous materials. In April, the NTSB issued similar recommendations to upgrade CPC-1232 tank cars, which have been the industry standard since 2011. The Department of Transportation (DOT) will soon be issuing a rule that is expected to phase out some of the cars from some hazardous materials service.