

SENATE TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & ENERGY COMMITTEES

JOINT HEARING

Tuesday June 9, 2015

Testimony by Commissioner Scott Martin and Randall Gockley, County EMA Coordinator

Good Morning. I'm Scott Martin, Vice-Chairman of the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners. Joining me today is our County's Emergency Management Director, Randall Gockley. Both of us are active members of the Lancaster County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which is responsible for planning, training and response to a hazardous materials release within the County. The authority of the LEPC is provided by State Law, Act 165 which continues to be a key piece of response legislation.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to comment on the planning and training efforts we have already taken in preparation for a Crude Oil Unit Train incident and to provide ideas and suggestions to further improve efforts statewide.

Crude Oil Unit Trains present challenges for emergency responders with the potential for significant public and environmental impact. We have already seen this over the past 2 years with serious incidents in other areas of the nation and Canada. In some cases, this has necessitated both community wide evacuations, as well as sheltering in place orders.

It is reported by Norfolk Southern, that 10 to 16 trains, each carrying in excess of 1 million gallons of flammable crude oil pass through the County weekly. These trains pass along what is called the "Port Road", a 32 ½ mile trek following the Susquehanna River through our County.

It goes through 10 different municipalities including the Boroughs of Marietta and Columbia and 8 mostly rural Townships as it runs from the Dauphin County Line to Maryland.

Within ½ mile of this railroad, 13,490 citizens live. The Susquehanna River, which is part of Lancaster County is within several hundred feet of the rail line. This ½ mile width area also includes 8 public water intakes which includes water being utilized by the City of Lancaster, Columbia Borough and Chester Water Authority; a variety of private water intakes, many that serve agricultural and industrial needs; several parks, islands and trails; osprey and bald eagle nests, 4 schools, 4 daycares and 3 major hydro electric dams and generating stations. Also, the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in York County could be impacted by a major spill into the River.

As you can sense, depending on where an accident involving a spill or a fire were to occur, serious consequences could occur. Our proactive efforts are being made to avoid a major loss of life, the impact of a serious environmental disaster and to minimize considerable energy and utility losses.

All areas where the unit trains pass are served by volunteer fire companies, career and volunteer Emergency Medical Services. Some of the communities have their own police departments, while several are served by PA State Police. A well trained volunteer Haz-Mat Response Team serves our County. All of the emergency services have limited resources which would limit the local efforts. We are looking at the reality that any serious incident would quickly escalate to a regional event and require the assistance and resources of both state and federal agencies.

Some of the steps that have been taken to date include:

On May 19, 2014, The County and LEPC sponsored a functional simulated rail accident exercise involving a rail incident in Marietta. 82 responders and elected officials participated in this

exercise which was sponsored through a grant from PEMA, TRANSCAER and Norfolk Southern.

In July of 2014, the County's Haz Mat Administrator, attended a 3 day class on response to unit train incidents held in Pueblo, Colorado with all expenses reimbursed and paid by Norfolk Southern. This class was a day and a ½ of classroom and a day and a ½ of practical exercises.

Considerable time was spent on foam use in case of a fire. The crude oil from the Bakken Region is has a considerably higher flammability compared to other grades of crude oil.

The exercise and class were very helpful in preparation for further response planning. I would now like to ask Director Gockley to explain our Crude Oil Unit Train or COUT Plan to you.

Randy

Thank you Commissioner. Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen:

Eric Bachman, the County's Hazardous Materials Administrator, has developed an in-depth plan for an incident involving a crude oil train. This includes planning for a major fire or spill without a resulting fire. He took the LEPC's standard plan for fixed facilities and modified it to be used at any location within the 32 mile area of the rail line. As a basis for his planning guidance, he utilized the 2012 edition of the Emergency Response Guide (ERG) Book which identifies a ½ mile radius hazard vulnerability zone for wherever the location of the accident would be.

Guide Number 128 provides the basic information from the ERG based on the chemical make-up of the Crude Oil. These ERG's are provided at no charge to every emergency service in the United States, so all responders to a Crude Oil event has access to it. **(Note: I will have a**

Copy of the Lancaster County COUT Plan and 2012 ERG Book for display/visual purposes)

Eric worked with the different municipal Emergency Management Coordinators, Fire Chiefs, and others emergency officials to research the local impact that an accident would have on the

community. This feedback from the local responders and officials was vital to develop a functional and realistic plan. It was extremely time-consuming, but was vitally important in an effort to help assure the safety of the communities.

This plan has been distributed on computer disc to the emergency response agencies within the 10 municipalities so that all emergency services have easy access to it. The County's efforts has become the model plan for the 8 County South Central Task Force. Both the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) has reviewed the plan and provided copies of the plan. Other areas of the Commonwealth, as well as bordering Maryland counties and Maryland state agencies have asked for copies and our agency has gladly shared generic copies of the plan to assist other areas.

Other efforts that our agency is participating in includes additional planning by the South Central Task Force, especially in the area of firefighting foam. A regional work group meets routinely to assure there are adequate logistical resources of foam and other needed items to mitigate the incident. Standard Operating Procedures for a large scale foam incident are being established. Also, we are participating with the state DEP which has hired a consulting firm to assure there is adequate hazardous material absorbent booms and related training in placing the booms for a spill in the Susquehanna River which is a mile wide at some locations. In my 27 year career we have not had the need to or the resources for that matter to completely boom the River from one side to the other. As noted earlier, with the water intakes, it is vitally important to limit the spill of crude oil into the waterway or ground. At this time, I would like to turn it back to Commissioner Martin for our suggestions and

recommendations moving forward.

Thank you Randy.

As you can see, we are taking the Crude Oil Unit Train threat very seriously within Lancaster County. We are pleased with our preparation efforts to date, but realize that planning continues to be a work in progress.

Exercises are very important and I would suggest that every County where a crude oil train passes have a functional exercise every 2 years specific to that threat. All three Lancaster County Commissioners participated with the 2014 rail exercise, as well as recent TMI and Peach Bottom exercises. As a participant, I realize the importance of having these exercises to maintain and understand my responsibility as an elected official with public safety.

A high level of training must be maintained. All firefighters are required to have annual hazardous materials training and in most classes, flammable liquids are included. What makes this different is the larger quantity involved. The emergency services are prepared for a small scale incident, but the amounts involved in a train spill or fire would be quickly overwhelming.

There is a need to continue to send responders out to Pueblo, but more realistically, it would be very cost effective to bring the classroom part of the Colorado School into Pennsylvania, so that many could be trained instead of just a few.

Ample funding must be provided by Norfolk Southern and other carriers to assure the local responders have the training, planning and response capabilities required. The State may want to expand Act 165 to include additional grant capabilities and reporting requirements for Unit Trains.

Also, one of the concerns that we heard from citizens is if there was a serious spill or fire, does

State law assure that the response and recovery costs faced by local government, response organizations, impacted businesses and individual citizens are covered. Some local constituents have asked for assurance that the railroads have satisfactory insurance in the aftermath of a catastrophic event. This is an issue that would have to be looked at Commonwealth wide.

Randy and I hope that we have shown you how Lancaster County takes the potential of a crude oil train incident very serious. We feel that this is a low probability threat, however, if it occurs would be a very dangerous and tedious incident. Rail carriers need to assure they are responsive to the concerns of the public and safety officials.

Over the past 2 years, we have seen several serious events in the nation and need to assure a high level of preparation for all areas of the State where these trains pass.

Thank you very much for allowing our comments and we welcome any questions or follow up information that you would like.

END OF COMMENTS Approximately 9 minutes