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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Statement for the Joint Senate Hearing Transportation Committee

Environmental Resources & Energy Committee

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Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

Robert Full, Chief Deputy Director

Chairman Rafferty, Yaw, Wozniak and Yudichak and Committee Members, I am Bob Full, Chief Deputy Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). With me today is State Fire Commissioner Tim Solobay who is available to answer any questions you may have regarding our on-going first responder training programs which address flammable liquid events. We thank you for the opportunity to provide these statements and discuss the emergency preparedness and public safety implications for the railway transportation of crude oil across the Commonwealth.

On behalf of Governor Wolf and Director Flinn, let me say that as the state agency responsible for emergency preparedness and response, we are well aware of and sensitive to the concerns associated with hazardous materials in our communities.

One of PEMA's primary functions is to work with county and local emergency managers to ensure that throughout the Commonwealth there is a state of readiness to respond to any type of emergency or disaster. In emergency management terms – it is an “all hazards” approach to emergency management.

Over the past 25 years PEMA has been recognized as a national leader in helping to prepare our local first responders in the event of an incident involving hazardous materials. With the support of the General Assembly, PEMA has developed a statewide network of state certified teams specially trained and equipped to respond to incidents in the work place, as well as on the highway and rail lines. As a former county emergency manager and HazMat team chief for many years, that statewide commitment to preparedness has had a direct and positive impact on community public safety.

My personal experience in emergency responses to hazardous material incidents includes serving as the first Hazardous Materials Team Chief for the City of Pittsburgh. During my 13 years in that capacity I responded to hundreds of chemical spill emergencies within the city and county. I was also the former President of the Pennsylvania State Association of Hazardous Materials Technicians. As Chief Deputy Director of PEMA, I can assure you that PEMA has been fully aware of, and engaged in, the railway crude oil transportation matter.

PEMA was fully engaged in the recent railway incident when a train slid off the tracks January 20, 2014, on the Schuylkill Arsenal Bridge while traveling from Chicago to a refinery in South Philadelphia. After that incident, we did an After Action Review (AAR) to assess the matter. Well before the incident in Philadelphia, PEMA had been working with CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSX) to enter into two Memoranda of Agreement. The agreements will give PEMA access to the CSX system in real-time, 24 hours a day. This will allow PEMA to track and monitor information on trains and commodities, including all hazardous materials being transported through Pennsylvania by CSX. This will enable PEMA to communicate quickly the train content information to the County Emergency Management Agency, the County 911 Center, and the local emergency first responders at the site of any rail emergency.

CSX is not the only transporter of hazardous material, including crude oil and ethanol, through the Commonwealth. The other major railway transporter of hazardous material in the Commonwealth is Norfolk Southern Corporation. As it did with CSX, PEMA is in dialog with Norfolk Southern to discuss the transport of these commodities.

As you know, a major key to the effort to revitalize Pennsylvania's southeast oil refineries was the ability to secure supplies of crude oil from the Bakken region of North Dakota and Montana. This crude oil has a lower flash, or ignition point, than several other conventional crude oils. In May, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued an Emergency Order requiring all shippers to test product from the Bakken region to ensure the proper classification of crude oil before it is transported by rail, while also prohibiting the transportation of crude oil in the lowest-strength packing group. In addition, it is our understanding that railway companies involved in the transport of this Bakken oil have voluntarily decided to lower speed limits in certain areas, redirect trains around high-risk areas, and to examine tracks more frequently.

PEMA receives grant funding from the DOT through the Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant Program. This is a program specifically aimed at planning and training for transportation incidents involving hazardous materials. On February 12, 2014, PEMA received word that the 2014-15 grant cycle will encourage the use of the grants for developing or revising emergency plans for the bulk shipments of crude oil by rail. For the last three years, PEMA has been providing grant funding to counties and the State Fire Academy for specialized training to firefighters regarding the hazards of ethanol which is also transported in large quantities via "Unit Trains" which are dedicated trains consisting of only one product. These are typically trains consisting of approximately 100 tank cars hauling the same product. In 2012, there were 1,597 individuals that received the ethanol firefighting training. With the new HMEP grant guidance from DOT, PEMA will be making planning and training for the crude oil trains incidents a funding priority for our firefighters.

On behalf of Governor Wolf and the more than twelve million Pennsylvanians we serve, I thank the leaders and members of both Committees for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.