



- Press Release

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## ‘Blast Zone’ signs warn of train danger

### Keepers’ action a warning to stay back 1 km

Six Slave Lake area derailments after bragging up their safety record at a Town council meeting, CN are now forced to perform \$21.7M in repairs. But who will check whether these repairs make us safe? The Keepers of the Athabasca call on Transport Canada to perform independent inspections instead of relying on rail companies, in order to verify public safety. Commemorating two years after Lac Megantic, Keepers are putting up "**Blast Zone**" signs to warn the public that within 1 kilometre from passing trains, we are in the ‘blast zone’. Experts in rail safety have determined that the ‘blast zone’ in case of an oil tanker explosion is at least 1 kilometre; during derailment, the risk of being hurt or killed within this zone is high. Thousands of tonnes of dangerous chemicals, diluent, and oil go through our communities daily, with millions of Canadians living in what we now understand are ‘blast zones’.

In September 2013, **Keepers of the Athabasca Director CNo David Loyie** took pictures of poor maintenance on train tracks in Slave Lake and put them on social media. He immediately got a strong response, as citizens have been concerned for years about the state of the tracks, in particular the ‘burnt bridge’, which caught fire three times over the past 100 years without being replaced. After experiencing terror and evacuation during the Slave Lake wildfire disaster of 2011, apprehension is heightened by Slave Lakers’ sensibilities to disaster. The Town of Slave Lake invited CN Rail to a council meeting to discuss rail safety. At the November 13, 2013, meeting packed with concerned public, CN officials bragged about their safety record, downplaying concerns voiced by both public and Town Councilors. That fall of 2013, Jim Bertrand, Western Canada Rail Safety Supervisor at Transport Canada, stated he was “intimately familiar with the railroad conditions in Slave Lake" and "the track and bridge conditions have never been so good...”

**The first derailment in Slave Lake** was on May 8, 2014, when 9 cars jumped the track right in the middle of town. The Transport Canada did not send investigators to the site. **By September 16, 2014, six train derailments took place** in and around Slave Lake. **CNo** said: “I’m not a fortune teller! I’m not a prophet of doom! I’m just telling it like it is. A 100 year old burnt bridge and busted up railroad ties have no chance to support the dangerous goods tanker cars that go through Slave Lake every day.”

Keepers of the Athabasca attended the *Statewide Strategy Symposium on Oil Trains* in Olympia, Washington, meeting with delegations from Lac Megantic, North Dakota, Vancouver, and Washington State. This network is exchanging ideas on how we can protect our countries, communities, families, and the environment from the trains that haul oil, diluent, and other lethal materials. We need to work together to let everyone know about the dangers involved when large volumes of toxic explosive products travel through towns and cities.

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