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Port of Vancouver should reconsider vote on oil terminal after oil train disaster

"I saw a mushroom cloud, like an atomic bomb, explode in the air."
– resident of Quebec town where oil train derailed.

"We've had a very good safety record for these 10 years. Well, I think we've blown it here."

- CEO of Rail-World, Edward Burkhardt

Vancouver, WA - After a tragic oil train explosion in the Quebec town of Lac-Mégantic, the Port of Vancouver's three commissioners are slated to vote yes or no on July 23, 2013, on a huge new oil export terminal in Vancouver, Washington. Trains to the proposed Tesoro oil terminal would carry the exact same Bakken oil that burned the Quebec town. The terminal would require 1,460 trains per year – at least 4 full trains per day - to pass through Vancouver neighborhoods.

"We're deeply saddened by the horrific tragedy in Quebec," stated Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director of Columbia Riverkeeper. "We do not want to invite this threat into our neighborhoods. We cannot in good conscience bring constant trainloads of explosive oil to Vancouver and down the Columbia River Gorge every day. Too many communities would be at risk of a tragedy of this magnitude."

Tesoro proposes shipping up to 380,000 barrels of crude oil each day along the Columbia River by creating a "pipeline on rails." This unprecedented proposal is nearly half the volume of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline.

Port Commissioners Jerry Oliver, Brian Wolfe, and Nancy Baker have scheduled a vote for Tesoro's oil trains and terminal on July 23, 2013, preceded by a public hearing on July 22, 2013. The Commissioners can request more information on public safety and require a derailment and fire response plan from Tesoro that shows the impact on communities.

"I can't imagine the Port Commissioners approving oil trains now," VandenHeuvel said. "Tesoro has given the Port very little information on how it would respond to a derailment explosion in a Vancouver neighborhood or in the river."

The Port of Vancouver Commissioners can deny the lease to Tesoro or require more information about public safety and emergency response before they vote.

The disaster in Lac Magantic occurred when a train carrying Bakken oil derailed and caused a devastating explosion and fire. As of July 8, five people are confirmed dead and forty are still missing. Two thousand of the 6000 residents were evacuated.



Bakken oil train burning, Lac-Magantic, Quebec.

Photo: Transportation Safety Board of Canada



Bakken oil train derailment, Lac-Mégantic, Quebec.

Photo: Transportation Safety Board of Canada