

Crude Oil Trains in Baltimore: Too Dangerous for the Rails

Big Oil companies' push to extract and refine more extreme forms of oil has led to unprecedented transport of explosive and climate-polluting crude oil on our nation's rail lines.

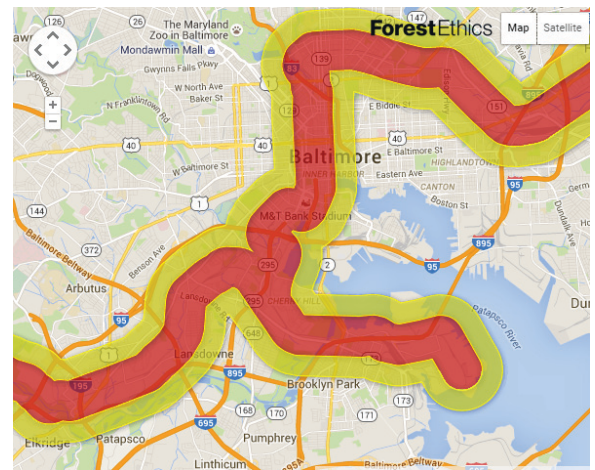
Crude oil train traffic grew 5,100 percent from 2008 to 2014 due to the rapid increase in fracking for oil in the Bakken shale fields of North Dakota and in tar sands oil extraction in Canada. An alarming number of derailments and explosions across North America has followed.

In Maryland, crude oil trains are a danger to communities near rail lines across the state and to Baltimore in particular. The oil industry has targeted Baltimore — the closest East Coast port to drilling sites in North Dakota — as a gateway to ship crude oil worldwide. The Trump administration is working to roll back the minimal safety regulations for crude oil trains put in place under the Obama administration and is actively expanding domestic and offshore drilling, making local protections against crude oil shipments even more critical.

Baltimore is standing up against Big Oil and making sure that our neighborhoods aren't used as a gateway for extreme crude oil.

Crude Oil Trains in Baltimore: Putting 165,000 Residents at Risk

- A Stand.earth analysis of known rail routes and U.S. Census data shows that 165,000 Baltimore residents live in the crude oil train “blast zone” — the area that could be directly impacted if a train were to derail and explode.
- Rail companies have fought to keep crude oil train routes secret in Maryland and even sued the state to prevent their public disclosure. However, we know that these trains have rolled through Baltimore. A company called Axeon shipped more than 100 million gallons of crude oil out of the Fairfield Peninsula in South Baltimore over the years 2013 and 2014.
- More crude oil may be passing through unreported, since a regulatory loophole allows rail companies to keep shipments smaller than 1 million gallons (a 35-car train) secret.



The City of Baltimore at risk. This map, produced by Stand.earth, shows the evacuation zone (red) for oil train derailments and the potential impact zone (yellow) in case of an oil train fire.



Explosive Oil: Too Dangerous for the Rails, Our Health and Our Climate

- **The crude oil that the fossil fuel industry is moving on trains is more toxic and explosive than conventional oil.** It contains a higher concentration of flammable methane and toxic fracking chemicals.
- **Not only are the contents extremely hazardous, but the trains themselves are outdated and dangerous.** A study by the National Transportation Safety Board found that crude oil trains have a high incidence of failure. The oldest model trains, labeled “DOT-111,” have derailed repeatedly around the country and are nicknamed “Pepsi cans on wheels.” But newer “CPC-1232” train car models have also exploded in recent derailments, proving that there is no safe way to transport crude oil by rail. To compound the threat, the nation’s rail infrastructure is crumbling. The American Society for Civil Engineers gave U.S. infrastructure a D+ in a 2017 report.
- **When accidents happen, the human and environmental impacts are costly.** The deadliest oil train explosion occurred in July 2013 in Lac-Mégantic, Québec. A 74-car crude oil train derailed and exploded, killing 47 people and destroying the town. In April 2014, 10 newer tank cars carrying crude oil derailed and exploded in Lynchburg, VA, spilling about 30,000 gallons of Bakken crude oil and setting the James River on fire for two hours. Between February 2015 and June 2016, nine trains carrying crude oil derailed and caused fires, explosions, and evacuations across the country.
- **The Baltimore neighborhoods most endangered by crude oil shipments already bear the brunt of the city’s industrial pollution.** In 2016, ATTOM Data Solutions found that the South Baltimore neighborhood of Curtis Bay, the residential neighborhood closest to Baltimore’s existing crude oil terminal, has the third highest Total Environmental Hazard Index value in the country.

Community Organizing: Beating Back Big Oil’s Plans

In June 2015, after reviewing hundreds of comments from residents and experts, Maryland regulators decided not to issue a permit for a Texas-based company to build a new crude oil shipping terminal in South Baltimore.



This move prevented an immediate increase in crude oil trains moving through Baltimore neighborhoods. But stronger action is urgently needed to protect our health, safety, and climate.

Since this decision, CCAN Action Fund and Clean Water Action have been fighting against explosive crude oil train shipments through Baltimore.

Baltimore City Can Protect Residents from Dangerous Crude Oil Shipments

CRUDE OIL TERMINAL PROHIBITION: The Baltimore City Council is considering a zoning ordinance (Bill #17-0150) to prohibit the construction of new crude oil terminals within Baltimore. This measure would prevent an increase in crude-by-rail traffic in the city and protect residents from explosive crude oil trains.

TAKE ACTION:

► **CONTACT YOUR CITY COUNCILMEMBER:** Ask them to support the zoning ordinance (Bill #17-0150) to prohibit the construction of new crude oil terminals within Baltimore. Identify your councilmember by visiting <http://www.baltimorecitycouncil.com/council-district-map>

► **JOIN THE MOVEMENT:** Get involved with our local team that’s working to transition Baltimore away from pollution and fossil fuels and toward a clean energy future. Join the team’s Google Group at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/nocbrbaltimore>.

► **QUESTIONS?** Contact Taylor Smith-Hams at taylor@chesapeakeclimate.org and Jennifer Kunze at jkunze@cleanwater.org for more information. Learn more and view references at <http://ccanactionfund.org/maryland/oil-trains-in-baltimore>

