



TEAMSTERS CANADA RAIL CONFERENCE DIVISION 320



Social and Communications Office
20358-118th Ave
Maple Ridge, B.C.
V2X 2M4
www.tcrc320.org

December 7, 2009

Subject: CN Derailment in Spy Hill Saskatchewan.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As posted on the TCRC National website.

In Solidarity,

Murray Douglas
TCRC Div 320
S&C Officer



Derailment, fire causing problems in Spy Hill

Published: December 6th 2009

Source: By Barb Pacholik, Leader-Post

A small Saskatchewan community is grappling with a big problem after 36 rail cars, some hauling propane and plastic pellets, jumped the tracks, sparking a stubborn blaze and forcing five families from their homes.

"You could see it all over the country glowing last night. It was pretty spectacular," one eyewitness said Sunday — more than 24 hours after the derailment on the CN mainline, about three kilometres southeast of Spy Hill.

Two locomotives were pulling 168 cars when something caused 36 of them to jump the tracks and pile up around 7 a.m. Saturday. According to CN Rail, 10 of the cars involved were hauling propane, sending flames skyward, much like a large torch. Witnesses said it could be seen as far as 50 kilometres away.

"It blazing pretty good out there," Isla Tymchen said as she looked out the window of Moe's Bakery in Spy Hill, located in the province's southeast about 13 kilometres from the Manitoba border.

No one was injured but five homes within a two-kilometre radius of the scene were evacuated. The closest was about a kilometre from the crash site.

"She said it sounded like a really good roar like as if somebody was running into their house — just from the roar of the flames," said Spy Hill RM reeve Bernard Mikolas.

Roads into the area were blocked off, and Transport Canada implemented a six-kilometre "no fly zone."

By Sunday the flames had subsided somewhat, but with plenty to fuel it, the fire was still far from over.

CN officials were using a helicopter to fly over the site as they discerned a plan of attack.

Some firefighters with Spy Hill's volunteer department remained on scene throughout the night Saturday and into Sunday as they monitored the situation. There was concern that if winds shifted towards the town, more evacuations might be necessary.

CN spokesperson Kelli Svendsen was quick to reassure: "There's absolutely no danger to the public."

She said the propane cars are designed to vent the product after a collision. "Fire is due to the venting of the product in the tank car, so it's working like it should be," she said.

"Currently there isn't an issue with it exploding, because it's venting. And that's causing the fire to shoot up into the air," Svendsen added. By Sunday, plastic pellets among the cargo were still burning, billowing black smoke.

Svendsen said CN's environmental and dangerous goods crews are at the site along with the local emergency responders. Once the fire subsides, recovery operations will begin.

"There's work being done ... We certainly have a recovery plan. We have equipment coming from all sorts of different locations. It's just a matter of accessing the area where the fire's occurring. We won't do that until it's safe to do so," Svendsen said.

She said other CN traffic will be rerouted around the site to another line that runs parallel to the north.

Svendsen added that those evacuated, "will be taken care of by CN."

Mikolas spent most of his weekend at the RM office trying to co-ordinate with his fellow counsellors.

Evacuees seemed to be taking the matter in stride. "Some have just gone to Christmas parties, and the Santa Claus parade (in nearby Esterhazy), and to their relatives, and in town," he said Saturday. Spy Hill is a close-knit community of about 200, where friends and relatives are never far.

For some residents, this derailment is summoning up memories of another crash that ended in tragedy. A collision between a train and a fuel tanker claimed four lives, including members of the train crew about three decades ago.

www.teamstersrail.ca