

Fire out at scene of Port Hope derailment

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PORT HOPE -- Security is tight and residents have been evacuated in an area east of Port Hope where upwards of 20 cars on a 116-car CN train have derailed.

Emergency Management Ontario recommended people leave the area surrounding the site of the derailment which occurred Sunday around 12:20 p.m. south of Hwy. 2 near Theatre Road in Port Hope.

CN Rail communications director Jim Feeny confirmed about 20 of the 116 cars derailed and that some of the derailed cars "do contain dangerous goods, fuel and propane."

No one was injured in the derailment and the cause is still under investigation. Fires at the scene have been extinguished.

People within the boundaries of Ward Street to the north in Hamilton Township, Lake Ontario to the south, Hamilton Road to the west, and Theatre Road South to the east were asked to leave their homes as a safety precaution.

They were advised to "quickly select basic clothing, medication, toiletry supplies and other essentials for several days absence."

Access to the crash site was shut down and a CN Rail hazardous material unit from Toronto was sent to the scene.

"There is a protocol based on the contents" to evacuate, said Port Hope Police Sgt. Peter Thivierge. "It's a minor evacuation because it's not a very populated area. My best guess is 20 houses."

VIA Rail closed its passenger line on the Toronto to Montreal corridor because of the derailment, communications director Catherine Kaloutsky said.

All travel in both directions on the Toronto-Montreal and Toronto-Ottawa routes was suspended.

Passengers on one VIA Rail train en route to Toronto and blocked by the derailment were being taken by bus because the evacuation area blocked their route, a spokeswoman said. Other travellers with reservations would also be taken by bus, but no new bookings were being accepted.



Photo courtesy CTV news

Aerial shot of a CN freight train derailment east of Port Hope Sunday, March 27. Northumberland OPP expected evacuation surrounding the site to be in effect at least 24 hours. March 27, 2011

"Over the last several years, we have worked hard to reduce the frequency and severity" of main track derailments, Mr. Feeny said. "We have made good progress."

The derailed cars were "about a third of the way back" on the train, which was carrying mixed cargo from Montreal to Toronto. "There were a lot of empty cars."

The Canadian Transportation Safety Board was alerted to the incident, he said.

-- *With files from Torstar network*