

CN Rail train carrying petroleum derails in Alberta

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CALGARY (Reuters) - A train carrying crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas derailed west of Edmonton, Alberta, causing an explosion and fire but no injuries, Canadian National Railway said on Saturday.

One rail car carrying liquefied petroleum gas exploded and three others also caught fire. Emergency crews battled the flames and worked to prevent the burning cars from triggering more explosions, a municipal authority spokesman said.

Residents were evacuated from Gainford, Alberta, 85 km (53 miles) from the provincial capital Edmonton, after the accident, which highlighted concerns in Canada about moving oil by rail. The community, part of the municipality of Parkland County, has a population of just over 100 people.

"We have cars on fire right now and there was an explosion earlier this morning. The major priority right now for our guys out in the field is containing these fires," said Parkland County spokesman Carson Mills.

Rail safety has become a central issue in Canada since the derailment in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, in July, when a runaway train carrying crude products exploded in the center of the town and killed 47 people.

In Alberta, CN Rail said initial indications are that 13 cars had derailed in the accident involving the westbound train, which happened at around 1 a.m. There were no injuries, but local authorities evacuated people from the area as a precaution, CN spokesman Louis-Antoine Paquin said in an email.

Nine of the 13 derailed cars nine were carrying liquefied petroleum gas and four carried crude, said Mills. The crude oil cars were intact and contained away from the fires with no indications of any leaks. CN Rail had earlier said there were four liquefied petroleum gas and nine crude oil cars.

Mills said 49 people had registered at the emergency evacuation center and would

not be allowed to return home for at least 24 hours.

The main east-west highway traversing central Alberta was closed for at least 24 hours.

Canada's Transportation Safety Board said it has sent a team of investigators to the site.

This is the third CN accident in recent weeks. Earlier this week, a CN train carrying anhydrous ammonia derailed in Sexsmith, Alberta.

A CN freight train derailed near the town of Landis, in the western Canadian province of Saskatchewan, on September 25, sending 17 cars off the track, one of which leaked lube oil.

On Thursday, the Canadian government imposed new regulations requiring tests to be conducted on crude oil before transporting or importing it into Canada. In the Lac-Mégantic crash, inspectors determined that the oil the train carried was more explosive than labeled.

(Reporting by Nia Williams and Solarina Ho; Editing by Eric Beech and Doina Chiacu)