

Train hauling crude oil derails on banks of South Platte River

By Bruce Finley *The Denver Post* May 9, 2014

A crude oil train that derailed Friday morning south of Greeley — with six cars toppled along the South Platte River — for several hours was leaking at a rate estimated at 20 to 50 gallons per minute.

Environmental Protection Agency officials were dispatched to the scene. No oil has been confirmed in the river thanks to the work of Union Pacific Railroad responders.

The 100-car train loaded with niobrara crude derailed west of LaSalle near a bridge over the river.

An earthen berm, and sandy material deposited by last fall's flood, was containing the oil as it spilled, according to EPA officials.

The Union Pacific crew placed oil spill booms on the river as a pre-caution. As of 1:20 p.m., no oil had been observed in the river, EPA response coordinator Joyel Dhieux said. She said crews will off-load the crude oil that is in the cars that overturned.

Railroad crews were using a vacuum truck and hose to recover oil from the toppled cars as the oil leaked on the riverside, EPA's on-scene coordinator Craig Myers said Friday afternoon.

"(Union Pacific) got pretty lucky on this one," Myers said. "So far, fairly minimal damage. There's five cars on their side. One is upside down. It is leaking."

Oil was leaking at the rate of 20 to 50 gallons a minute, he said. "They can't really plug it."

Nationwide, the volume of crude oil transported by train has been increasing, raising safety concerns. Federal transportation officials this week warned that moving oil by train is becoming a hazard and said railroads will be required to notify local emergency responders when oil trains are moving through their area.

The cause of the derailment was under investigation, but authorities said it appeared to be accidental.

No injuries were reported and no one was evacuated from the area, said Roy Rudisill, Weld County's director of emergency management.

"I don't know what the extent of the leak is, like how many gallons," he said Friday afternoon.