

# Derailments not uncommon says CN spokesman

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In the last few weeks there have been three minor derailments in the Edson CN rail yards, the latest being on July 26 when two cars carrying lumber went off the tracks.

CN director of Public Affairs Jim Feeny said derailments are often not reported if they are minor in nature. This was fact confirmed by Edson Fire Department Deputy Fire Chief Tyler Robinson.

CN does not normally report derailments to the town but there are exceptions, said Robinson.

“Not unless it’s going to block traffic for a long time or it becomes a hazard.”

Most derailments in rail yards are of the slow speed, minor impact variety, said Feeny.

Derailments in rail yards occur for a variety of reasons.

“There’s no common denominator. The infrastructure remains safe and strong,” Feeny said.

There was no information available at Leader press time on the cause of the derailments but all are under investigation.

Meanwhile, CN continues to hire personnel throughout the region. The railway continues to hire on a planned, sustained basis because of the graying workforce and subsequent retirements, Feeny said.

“The wave of retirements began about four or five years ago. We’ll continue [to hire] for another three to four years.”

Feeny said over that span the railway will continue to hire several thousand people per year across the system.

The CN system is a long one, stretching over 23,000 track miles across Canada and the US.

The company, in order to enhance training procedures, recently opened training centres in Winnipeg and Ohio.

“Every new hire will go through there for an initial orientation,” said Feeny.

The Winnipeg training centre is located in the suburb of Transcona, where CN has a yard and a shop. The trainers at Transcona have plenty of experience.

“The trainers are mostly retired railroaders who have come back to do this,” Feeny said.

The company uses computerized simulation programs for training purposes in both of their locations. Once they have completed their training new hires are matched up with railway veterans at various job sites.

As to where the new hires will be working out of, this depends, said Feeny.

“It depends where we need people. It may be Grande Prairie or Saskatchewan or even Edson. We’re looking for people across the network.”

Railway routes stretch from Halifax in the east to Vancouver and Prince Rupert in the west and from Toronto and Winnipeg to New Orleans.

Canadian railway men don’t generally work south of the border but there are exceptions when it comes to management personnel. How many Canadians can work in the US depends on immigration and union rules.

“We have about 22,000 employees,” said Feeny.