

Canadian company's railway cars carrying ethanol derail, catch fire in Iowa

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A freight train, owned by Canadian Pacific Railway, carrying ethanol fuel with one car engulfed in flames, sits on the banks of the Mississippi River in a remote location north of Dubuque, Iowa in this Feb. 4, 2015 picture provided by Dubuque Telegraph Herald. REUTERS/Mike Burley/Dubuque Telegraph Herald/Handout.

Eleven railway cars carrying ethanol fuel derailed on Wednesday in a remote location north of Dubuque, Iowa, and three of them caught on fire, Canadian Pacific (CP) railway said.

There were no injuries in the accident involving an eastbound 81-car freight train, said Jeremy Berry, spokesman for the railway.

A total of 12 railway cars derailed, and 11 of those were carrying ethanol, Canadian Pacific said in a statement.

The railway did not confirm reports in the *Dubuque Telegraph Herald* that three cars had fallen into the Mississippi River. The waterway is frozen or near-frozen and there is no river traffic in the area, an Army Corps of Engineers official said.

The incident is likely to add to a debate about transporting flammable goods by train after a series of fiery accidents involving crude oil cargoes in recent years.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has proposed new safety features for new tank cars transporting fuel and called for the phasing out of older cars considered unsafe.

The U.S. ethanol industry has pushed back on the new rules, saying regulators should distinguish between corn-based biofuel and crude oil.

Ethanol is less volatile than crude oil, is biodegradable and has a 99.997 percent rail safety record, according to the national Renewable Fuels Association.

Iowa Renewable Fuels Association Executive Director Monte Shaw was not immediately available to comment on Wednesday's accident.

Last year, he told Reuters his group supports additional regulations to strengthen railcar safety, especially measures that would help prevent accidents, but that new rules should take into account the differences between ethanol and crude oil.

"CP's emergency protocols were immediately enacted and all safety precautions and measures are being taken as our crews respond to the incident," the railway said in the statement.

Berry said hazardous materials teams from the railway would coordinate with officials in investigating the incident.

The area around the accident was evacuated as a precaution, but there were no homes close by, the *Telegraph Herald* said, citing fire and emergency personnel.