

Guernsey (Lanigan), Saskatchewan (2019)

Location: Guernsey, Saskatchewan

File Number: 1201-03

TSB File Number: R19W0320

The Accident

According to the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) report, on December 9, 2019, a CP¹ crude oil unit train, destined for Stroud, Oklahoma, experienced a train-initiated emergency brake application at Mile 48.85 near Guernsey, Saskatchewan. CP confirmed that the train was hauling a mix of jacketed CPC-1232 cars and retrofitted TC-117R cars loaded with petroleum crude oil - UN 1267. Thirty-three tank cars carrying crude oil derailed, of which about 20 of the cars released product. The derailment resulted in the leaking of some 1.77 million litres of oil and igniting a large blaze, which burned for approximately 24 hours. Lack of visibility due to fire smoke resulted in the closure of Highway 16.

Damages

No injuries or casualties were reported. CP said in a news release that it did not believe local waterways had been affected. A local resident from Lanigan, Saskatchewan, told news officials that she believed some oil may have spilled at the end of her pasture and was worried about the possibility of her wells having been contaminated.

CP's emergency response worked to clean and restore the affected areas. CP said it would implement a soil remediation plan based on the tests being done by its specialized experts in consultation with the local authorities.

The Investigator-in-charge at TSB has reported that the incident was suspected to be caused by an undetected broken rail.

Since then, Transport Canada issued ministerial orders instructing railways to strengthen track inspection practices and to reduce speeds for trains carrying certain goods. Additionally, CP has implemented new safety measures including a wayside system for detecting rail breaks in non-signaled territory, an increase in its number of autonomous track geometry measuring systems and an upgrade to the Sutherland Subdivision track infrastructure.

Measures Taken by the Rail Fund

We reached out to CP Claims Department who predicted that the damages incurred from the incident would not likely utilize CP's insurance.

We consulted available reporting from the TSB's Rail Transportation Safety Investigations and Reports database. Based on the available data and the extent of damages resulted from the accident, it is most unlikely that the Rail Fund will be triggered for compensation purposes.

Status

The TSB closed this file and published their report on 5 October 2023. This report can be found on the TSB website. However, we will continue to monitor this accident until the six-year time limit for claiming against the railway company has expired in December 2025.

¹ The company is now called CPKC.

Related files

1201-04, Guernsey (6 February 2020), very close to this accident's location.