



**Photo Credit:** Michael Forian/Twitter  
Catastrophic 2013 Lac-Mégantic train derailment and explosion.<sup>1</sup>

## Railroads Sure Ain't What They Used to Be

*Long gone are the nostalgic days of clickety clack and “The Little Engine That Could”*

Today's freight trains groan as they pull ever increasing weight, haul 2 ½ mile-long loads, and fear they better not be late! Our tired, 21st century engines – Just Can't.

Now, trains roll through our communities carrying any of nearly 400 types of hazardous substances,<sup>2</sup> like ethylene oxide, anhydrous ammonia, chlorine gas, Bakken crude oil, spent nuclear fuel, and liquified natural gas, as well as security-sensitive materials<sup>3</sup> including military weapons<sup>4</sup> such as bombs, cartridges for weapons, rockets, warheads, torpedoes, mines, grenades, ammunition, and projectiles. During the summer of 2013, a horrific train derailment and ‘atomic bomb-sized’ explosion in Quebec, Canada killed 47 unsuspecting residents of Lac-Mégantic and decimated the core of their business center.<sup>5</sup> In February 2023, phosgene gas was released in East Palestine, Ohio – a chemical weapon of mass terror so deadly it was banned after WWI.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerreat, Jessica, and Lydia Warren. “Lac-Mégantic Fire: Death Toll Rises to 5 and Massive Fire Is Still Burning a Day after Unmanned Train Carrying Oil Derailed and Exploded in Quebec Town.” *Daily Mail Online*, Associated Newspapers, 8 July 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2357828/Lac-Megantic-Death-toll-rises-5-massive-STILL-burning-day-unmanned-train-carrying-oil-derailed-exploded-Quebec-town.html>.

<sup>2</sup> “CP.” *Canadian Pacific Railway*, 1 Jan. 2023, <https://www.cpr.ca/en/customer-resources-site/Documents/tariff-8-hazardous-commodities-jan-01-2023.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “Plans to Secure Hazardous and Other Security-Sensitive Shipments Due to Labor Uncertainty.” *UP*, 9 Sept. 2022, <https://www.up.com/customers/announcements/customernews/generalannouncements/CN2022-50.html>.

<sup>4</sup> “CN.” *Canadian National Railway*, 7 Jan. 2023, <https://www.cn.ca/-/media/files/customer-centre/shipping/rssm-commodities-list-en.xls?la=en&hash=ef350ccae487f5e9ab01a53cdb4ef6a17bc732a8>.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, Bruce. “Nine Years after the Lac-Mégantic Rail Disaster, Canadian Pacific Railway Still Refuses to Accept Any Responsibility.” *Thestar.com*, Toronto Star, 1 July 2022, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2022/07/01/nine-years-after-the-lac-mgantic-rail-disaster-canadian-pacific-railway-still-refuses-to-accept-any-responsibility.html>.

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## Over 5.7 million children attending 14,800 schools are in harm's way - despite the public's Right-to-Know (SARA, Title III), parents have no idea.

- Trains travel on turn of the century railroads<sup>6</sup> that were never built to accommodate the weight and frequency of its current cargo. The industry is allowed to maintain its own infrastructure – but simply chooses not to do so.
- Railroad workers suffer from fatigue and inhumane working conditions because of an attendance policy unlike any other industry that forces them to go to work when they are sick and lack adequate rest.<sup>7</sup> Congress sided with Big Business, voting against seven days paid sick leave for our railroad workers while the very next day Canada mandated ten for its private sector.<sup>8</sup>
- State Emergency Planning Commissions (SERCs) and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) across the rail transportation corridor are sorely underfunded and lack human resources necessary to *plan, train, and equip* their communities. In 2022, EMA Director David Christensen reported McHenry County, IL had four paid staff; Emergency Manager Dan Eder of Lake County, IL indicated only three.
- Rail cargo can be embargoed<sup>9</sup> and held on private property by foreign-owned, private companies that have their own private police force<sup>10</sup> with full criminal law enforcement powers.

Bring us back to the good ol' days when people cared about one another – put people before profits and make our railroads safe! Visit [La-Coalition.org](https://La-Coalition.org) to learn more.

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<sup>6</sup> Margolis, Jared. "Runaway Risks: Oil Trains and the Government's Failure to Protect People, Wildlife and the Environment." (n.d.): 1-17. Center for Biological Diversity. Feb. 2015. Web. 26 June 2016.  
<[https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/oil\\_trains/pdfs/runaway\\_risks\\_web.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/oil_trains/pdfs/runaway_risks_web.pdf)>.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon, Aaron. "The Worst and Most Egregious Attendance Policy' Is Pushing Railroad Workers to the Brink." *VICE*, 5 Apr. 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dgezn/the-worst-and-most-egregious-attendance-policy-is-pushing-railroad-workers-to-the-brink>.

<sup>8</sup> "Rail News - Canada Mandates Paid Sick Leave for Regulated Businesses. for Railroad Career Professionals." *Progressive Railroading*, 5 Dec. 2022, [https://www.progressiverailroading.com/federal\\_legislation\\_regulation/news/Canada-mandates-paid-sick-leave-for-regulated-businesses--68102](https://www.progressiverailroading.com/federal_legislation_regulation/news/Canada-mandates-paid-sick-leave-for-regulated-businesses--68102).

<sup>9</sup> Lassen, David. "Railroads Begin Embargoes on Hazardous Materials in Preparation for Possible Work Stoppage (Updated)." *Trains*, 9 Sept. 2022, <https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/railroads-begin-embargoes-on-hazardous-materials-in-preparation-for-possible-work-stoppage/>.

<sup>10</sup> Marsh, Joanna. "Whistleblower Questions CP Police Force Powers in US after KCS Merger." *FreightWaves*, 28 Sept. 2022, <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/whistleblower-questions-cp-police-force-powers-in-us-after-kcs-merger>.

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