

# Railway Accidents, Spills and Casualties

## Northern BC Rail Line

Compiled by Friends of *Morice Bulkley* - Updated 02 December 2020

### 1 DISCLAIMER: THERE IS NO COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SOURCE FOR RAILWAY ACCIDENTS IN CANADA

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The rail industry in Canada and the United States does not publish information about the number, frequency, nature, and scope of railway accidents.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) undertakes extensive investigation of only a handful of occurrences when deemed probable it can advance transportation safety.<sup>1</sup> The TSB also monitors occurrence statistics to identify trends and emerging safety risks that it believes government and industry should address. The TSB classifies occurrences as either 'incidents' or 'accidents', with accidents being the more serious.

The determination of whether an event is reportable and the responsibility for reporting to the TSB lies principally with the rail carriers. A continuing CBC News investigation into rail safety has found that Canadian National Railway (CN) did not report to authorities more than 1,800 derailments and accidents, including 44 on key rail arteries.<sup>2</sup> (Key trains are those with 20 or more cars carrying dangerous cargo.)

This came to light in 2005 when the Transportation Safety Board's director of rail investigations says he became suspicious of a dramatic difference between CN's accident numbers compared to other operators. The safety watchdog agency took an unprecedented step and issued a statutory summons in June 2006 to CN Rail requiring it to turn over its complete safety records. The TSB found unreported over a six-year period:

- 1,700 non-main-track derailments.
- 44 main-track derailments.
- One main-track collision.
- 64 non-main-track collisions.
- One fire/explosion.
- One crossing accident.
- 32 other accidents.

CN public affairs spokespeople confirm concerns expressed in the past by the TSB that CN routinely does not report derailments to the TSB. In 2014, public affairs spokesperson Emily Hamer of CN responded to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://railroaded.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/railroaded-cbc-news-dec-9-2013>

a question by the media why the public was not informed of a recent derailment by saying it is not CN's practice to release derailment information unless asked by the media.<sup>3</sup>

Jim Feeny of CN told the Edson Leader<sup>4</sup> that derailments are not uncommon and are often not reported by CN. Such under-reporting of derailments by CN certainly has an impact on the perceived safety record of the rail giant, and on its stock performance. CN has been sued by several parties<sup>5</sup> for allegedly manipulating data to improve safety and productivity statistics and for allegedly misleading shareholders.

In 2019 Liam Harrap, reporter for the Terrace Standard investigated how often train derailments happen.<sup>6</sup> According to data from the TSB, in total, there have been more than 10,000 derailments in Canada since 2004. CN, which operates most trains in Canada, has the most derailments at almost 5,500. Canadian Pacific is second at more than 4,000 derailments. There are on average at least 50 derailments per month across Canada.

## 2 RAILWAY OCCURRENCES (INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS) IN NORTHERN BC 2003-2013 (HAGGERSTONE)

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James Haggerstone, Prince George health information analyst, enumerated railway occurrences in northern BC from 2003 to 2013.<sup>7</sup> Haggerstone relied heavily on public media sources, examined railway financial records and held many conversations with the TSB for this publication.

Over the ten-year period investigated, Haggerstone found an average 59 occurrences per year in northern BC. Main track collisions and derailments averaged 8.7 per year. Non-main track collisions and derailments averaged 26.1 per year, or 75% of the total. (We assume that many of these non-main track occurrences are in rail sorting yards inside municipal boundaries.)

There were 3.8 crossing accidents per year.

Release of dangerous goods on board or from rolling stock is considered an incident. There were 14.9 occurrences involving dangerous goods per year. Incidents were classified as 'dangerous goods leakers' on average 6.4 times per year.

**Four railway occurrences were subject of full TSB investigation and resulted in publication of reports that are visible to the public as follows:**

*14 May 2003 CN freight train toppled into the gulley below when the bridge they were travelling over near McBride BC collapsed killing two crew members.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://railroaded.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/railroaded-cjme-art-aug-21-2014.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://railroaded.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/railroaded-edson-leader-art-aug-7-20141.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://railroaded.wordpress.com/2013/09/29/allegations-of-canadian-national-railway-criminal-conduct-financial-mismanagement-and-other-irregularities/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.terracestandard.com/news/how-often-do-train-derailments-happen/>

<sup>7</sup> Haggerstone, J. 2013. *Railway Occurrences (Incidents and Accidents) in Northern BC 2003-2013*.

The TSB undertook an exhaustive investigation.<sup>8</sup> Findings included the failure to identify the urgency and the severity of the condition of the bridge was not recognized, despite inspections, because of shortcomings in the inspection, assessment, planning, and maintenance process. A fire ensued and the bridge, the two locomotives, and the five cars loaded with lumber were destroyed.

*4 August 2007 A runaway train in Prince George rail yards struck the 13<sup>th</sup> car of a train that was entering the yard. The 13<sup>th</sup> car was a load of gasoline. Other cars, locomotives and fuel tank cars became involved.*

Approximately 172 600 litres of fuel (1600 litres of diesel and 171 000 litres of gasoline) were spilled. Most of the fuel was consumed by fire but an unknown amount of fuel entered the Fraser River. The TSB investigation found that the collision occurred when the excessive tonnage of the 53 cars and the descending track gradient combined to exceed the braking capacity.<sup>9</sup> The two trains that collided had no operators on board the locomotives. Management employees operating the Beltpack remote control units that day were inadequately trained and had little experience. The risk assessment conducted immediately prior to the accident was inadequate.

*TSB photo of post-collision fire and fuel entering Fraser River*



The media reported that an hour and a half passed before a CN employee uncoupled and pulled five tank cars away from the burning train. Once the tank cars were moved away from the scene, CN refused

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/2003/r03v0083/r03v0083.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/2007/r07v0213/r07v0213.html>

to tell the “command” post what the cars contained.<sup>10</sup> The TSB report later revealed the five cars contained over 50,000 gallons of diesel and gasoline.

*12 February 2011 derailment of a CN unit coal train travelling westward at approximately 45 mph when it derailed 36 of 104 coal cars near Fort Fraser, BC. No reported injuries.*

A rail car wheel fractured when a crack, which had been growing over a period of time, reached such a size that the wheel could no longer support normal service loads.

*21 December 2011 a unit coal train travelling westward experienced a train-initiated emergency brake application leading to the derailment of 19 loaded coal cars near Cariboo BC (west of Vanderhoof). There were no injuries.*<sup>11</sup>

Nineteen CN rail cars carrying coal derailed on the main track after a wheel gave out and caused emergency braking. In the TSB investigated the above two derailments together and the reports are highly technical. The TSB criticized CN and reiterated to Transport Canada to put regulations in place for wheel safety inspections on rail cars. The American Association of Railways has set a threshold of 90,000 pounds of impact for rail operators in the U.S. to pull the train and replace wheels. Unfortunately, Transport Canada has no threshold in place even though on Dec. 1, 2011 the TSB called on Transport Canada to establish one.<sup>12</sup>

### 3 2019 TSB 10-YEAR STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF RAIL OCCURRENCES IN CANADA

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Annually, the TSB publishes a rolling 10-year statistical summary of rail occurrences (accidents and incidents) in Canada. The most recent TSB Summary<sup>13</sup>, for 2019, found that a 17% increase in accidents and casualties in 2019 from the previous 10-year average. Much of that increase occurred in the past 3 years.

The number of main-track accidents totalled 276 in 2019, up from 212 in 2018 and 51% above the 10-year average of 183. A portion of this increase in main-track accidents is due to the unusually high number of right-of-way fires on main-track reported to the TSB in 2019 (42). Rail activity on main track (i.e., non-yard) increased by 1% from the previous year. The main-track accident rate in 2019 was 3.3 accidents per million main-track train miles, up from 2.6 in 2018 and 42% above the 10-year average of 2.3.

Kendall’s tau-b correlation and Sen’s estimate of slope were used to quantify the trend in main track accidents and accident rates. There was a moderately strong, positive correlation that indicates an upward trend in accidents per million main-track train miles over the period.

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<sup>10</sup> Ben Meisner, 250 News 8 August 2007. *Just What Was In Those Tanker Cars? One Man’s Opinion.*

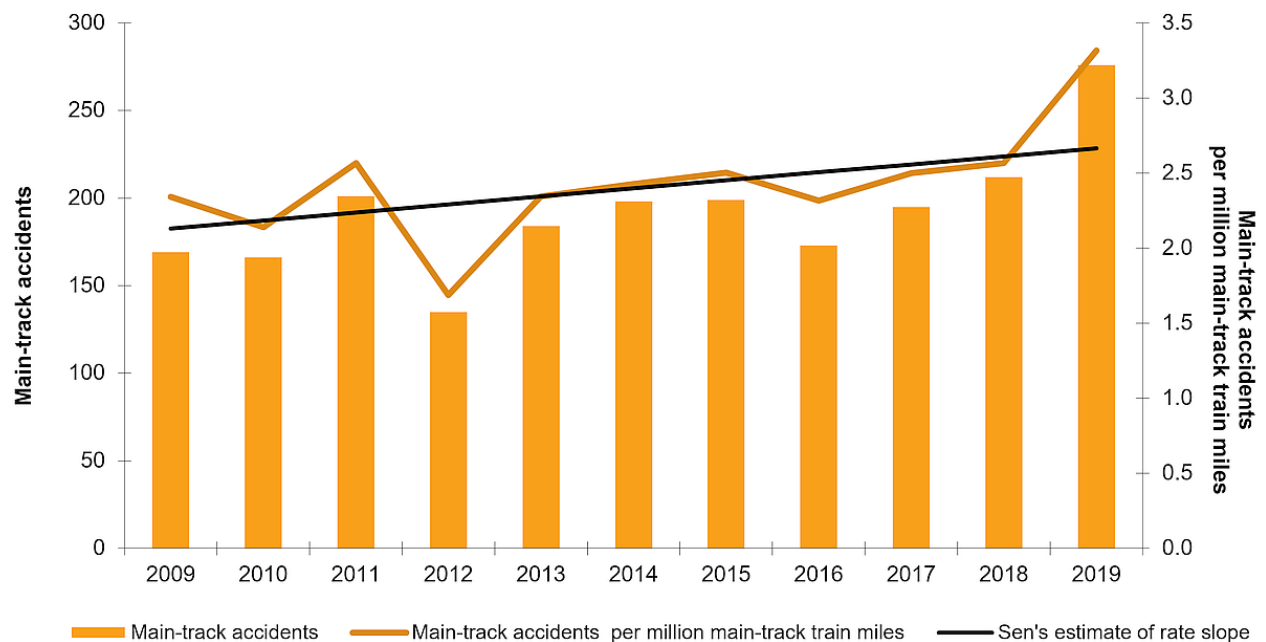
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bst-tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/2011/r11v0254/r11v0254.html>

<sup>12</sup> Canadian Press Jan 22/13, TSB Report R11V0254

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bst-tsb.gc.ca/eng/stats/rail/2019/sser-ssro-2019.html>

**Figure 5 (in Rail Transportation Occurrences in 2019<sup>14</sup>)**

**Number of main-track collision and derailment accidents, 2009 to 2019**



Fifteen railway employees were seriously injured in 2019, above the 10-year average of 11.

Crossing accidents represented one of the more serious types of rail accidents in 2019, with 29% of these resulting in either serious or fatal injuries. There were 26 fatal crossing accidents in 2019.

In 2019, 169 accidents involved dangerous goods, above the 10-year average of 127. Eight of these accidents resulted in a dangerous goods release in 2019, compared to the 10-year average of 4.

Three fatalities and 1 serious injury resulted from main-track derailments in 2019. Nineteen main-track derailments resulted in release of product (2 crude oil, 1 diesel fuel and octanes, 1 octanes, 1 methanol, and 1 sulphuric acid).

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bst-tsb.gc.ca/eng/stats/rail/2019/sser-ssro-2019.html>

## 4 Rail occurrences on the northern BC CN line reported by the website Railroaded.<sup>15</sup>

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The following are only a sample of the many occurrences reported on this site.

*May 2008. Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure & Communities released its report on Rail Safety in Canada.*<sup>16</sup> The report was particularly critical of CN's carrying out of safety standards and manner of reporting safety issues. The Committee wrote, "Due to the frequency of rail accidents in Canada in the last few years, notably in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, there is a concern that the rate of accidents is on the rise. The repercussion from these accidents has been severe in terms of human fatalities and environmental damage."

The Committee remained concerned about both the increase in main track derailments and the need for better rail safety generally across the country. There is a lack of accountability by both Transport Canada and the railroads with regard to rail safety. Transport Canada is not accountable enough in enforcing safety regulations, ensuring the implementation of safety procedures is more consistent across the country, conducting safety audits and making safety audit results public. Transport Canada needs more resources and needs a more hands on approach to rigorous inspection programs and to enforcing safety regulations.

The railways, particularly CN, were criticized for the lack of meaningful management-employee consultations, poor crew training, poor employee fatigue management, and poor prioritizing and carrying out of safety procedures. The Committee also criticized Transport Canada and the railways for the serious delays in implementing the Safety Management Systems, developed 7 years earlier. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the optimal level, CN was at level 1 or 2, CP at 3 and Via Rail at 4 in terms of progress to properly implement the Safety Management Systems. CN employees were reluctant to report safety violations, for fear of reprisals from the company, and stated they were working within a "culture of fear". The fear of discipline for reporting safety violations was viewed by CN employees as a major deterrent to reporting such violations. The Standing Committee developed 14 recommendations to address the above-mentioned shortcomings.

*21 Feb 2012. Derailment and coal spill 12km east of Smithers BC*

Forty-six coal cars went off the track, spilling coal and damaging rail cars and rail tracks. One nearby resident said, "My property is a hell of a mess. I have property on both sides and they've made a mess of everything."<sup>17</sup>

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15 CN Railway Derailments, Other Accidents and Incidents Prepared by Railroaded – Updated March 12, 2015 <https://railroaded.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/cn-railway-derailments-other-accidents-and-incidents26.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Maclean's. 7 July 2008. *May 2008 Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure & Communities released its report on Rail Safety in Canada.*

<sup>17</sup> Houston Today March 3/12

*30 Jan 2013. Prince George BC diesel spill*

More than 3,000 litres of diesel fuel spilled from a punctured CN locomotive fuel tank in the Prince George rail yard.<sup>18</sup>

*25 July 2014. Collision with logging truck west of Burns Lake BC*

A CN train rammed into a logging truck at an uncontrolled crossing, knocking 22 train cars and 2 locomotives off the tracks. An undisclosed amount of diesel fuel was spilled.<sup>19</sup>

## 5 RAILWAY OCCURRENCES (INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS) IN NORTHERN BC 2018 TO SEPTEMBER 2020 (UPDATED 29 SEP 20)

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Friends of Morice Bulkley attempted to compile recent railway occurrence reports for the northern BC rail corridor using the TSB website<sup>20</sup> and relying heavily on reports by local and national media. Unlike Mr. Haggerstone, we were unable to scour CN financial reports. Nor were we able to search every media source, so consider this an incomplete sampling of occurrences in the past few years.

*2 April 2009 CN train derailment on the curve just before the old Skeena Bridge in Terrace BC<sup>21</sup>*

(We added this first older news story because it occurred as a train is crossing the Skeena River and because it was the second derailment at the exact same location three years apart.)

Reporter Merv Ritchie said it appeared that the train likely derailed due to the weight of the cars following at the rear. This same scenario happened April 26, 2006 - empty rail cars at the lead with heavier tank cars carrying liquids at the rear. The heavy laden tank cars at the rear were labeled Methyl Alcohol, Flammable liquid.

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<sup>18</sup> Vancouver Sun April 24/14

<sup>19</sup> CTV News July 25/14

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/index.html>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.mwpr.ca/show3780a/ANOTHER\\_CN\\_TRAIN\\_DERAILMENT\\_ON\\_SKEENA](http://www.mwpr.ca/show3780a/ANOTHER_CN_TRAIN_DERAILMENT_ON_SKEENA)



REPORTING · 2nd April 2009  
ANOTHER CN TRAIN DERAILMENT ON SKEENA



In this picture you can see the top of the Old Skeena bridge in the distance and the last chip car connected to the tankers near the rock bluff.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.mwpr.ca/cgi-bin/show\\_articles.cgi?ID=3782&TOPIC=0](http://www.mwpr.ca/cgi-bin/show_articles.cgi?ID=3782&TOPIC=0)

*31 March 2015 two rail cars appearing to be hauling coal derailed upright in CN's yard in Smithers BC during normal yard operations.*<sup>23</sup> The Transportation Safety Board lists 16 derailments in or near Smithers between 2004 and 2012.

*19 December 2017 CN train derailed about 30 miles north of Smithers BC*<sup>24</sup>. According to CN, the multiple cars that were derailed were empty. "I've never been satisfied with Canada's rail safety record or the prescriptions," said Skeena-Bulkey Valley MP Nathan Cullen to The Interior News.

Two planned propane export facilities and a fuel depot in Prince Rupert mean more explosive cargo could soon be coming through the Bulkley Valley's communities, often through residential neighbourhoods.

"I've had a few conversations with the Minister of Transport. We've talked about this (liquefied propane) project in particular, the increased risk and what mitigations are going to come in. They haven't committed to anything yet specific to this proposal, yet I think there's more to come," said Cullen.

"They have a whole new national strategy that was rolled out a couple of years after Lac Mégantic, but there was much more said than done and I'm looking for the actions not just the words ... As we saw with the recent derailment, they're going to continue to happen. Yet when you get more risk on the line, my argument is you have to bring more equipment and more training into the region because the current response times for any derailments while are technically acceptable by the law, are not acceptable at all by our community standards."

*19 January 2018 CN train derailment near New Hazelton BC spills coal in Mission Creek*

There was a derailment of CN freight train near New Hazelton in January 2018. Twenty-seven cars spilled coal onto the frozen Mission Creek southwest of New Hazelton near the Highway 16 overpass.<sup>25</sup> Emergency Management B.C. said the bulk of the spilled coal was removed from the ice within 6 days and piled on the bank.

Greig Houlden (pers comm.) was active in the enhancement society constructing a fish fence and restoring spawning habitat in Mission Creek prior to the spill. He and other society members followed subsequent events at the spill site. The stockpile was largely removed from the stream bank by 3 weeks later. A (comparatively) small amount of coal remained piled in that area until into the summer, besides the scattered 100 tonnes that were never recovered. Houlden believes the coal remaining at the spill site is, and will continue to, leach contaminants into the soil, groundwater and stream for coming decades.

Coho salmon returning to Mission Creek numbered close to 400 annually prior to the spill. In 2018 (the year of the spill) 30 coho were counted returning through the fence. Returns in 2019 (3-year-old returns that would have been pre-smolts during the coal spill) were well below average. The 4 year old returns

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.interior-news.com/news/derailment-in-smithers/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.interior-news.com/news/cn-train-derails-north-of-smithers/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.terracestandard.com/news/northwest-b-c-train-derailment/>

from that brood year would return late Fall 2020 (Brenda Donas, Chicago Creek Environmental Enhancement Society, pers.comm.)

The TSB investigation confirmed the derailment was caused by a broken axle and concluded that the routine visual inspection could not have detected the fatigue cracks in the axle the cracked part is concealed by wheel bearing components. The train received a certified car inspection in Prince George four days before the derailment. A pull-by inspection was also performed at the last crew change in Smithers, where it left from the morning of the derailment.

“Without alternate strategies to identify fatigue cracks or to predict the likelihood of fatigue cracks developing, problematic axles might not be removed from service in a timely manner, increasing the risk of broken-axle derailments,” concludes the media release<sup>26</sup> that accompanied the TSB report.

The New Hazelton derailment was not unique. The TSB report reads that from 2008-2017, there were 23 derailments on CN and Canadian Pacific Railway tracks caused by a broken axle. Nine of the axles broke like in the New Hazelton incident: near where the wheel and wheel bearing is mounted on the axle.

*12 October 2018 Five train cars carrying wood pellets derailed at about 4:30 a.m while being moved into Smithers rail yard.*<sup>27</sup> CN media relations manager said the cause of the derailment is unclear.

*4 February 2019 CP train derailment near Field BC - 3 crew members fatally injured*

(We added this accident on the CP rail line because it resulted in a CBC investigation relating to both CN and CP.)

Initially, it was thought that the train came to a stop at the Spiral Tunnels, and the emergency brakes were deployed to prevent the train from moving. None-the-less the train began to move, picking up speed down the steep slope. The accident lead 112 train cars to plummet down the steep terrain, coming to a crash at the end, with one car in the Kicking Horse River. The cars were carrying grain, and 40 to 60 cars derailed.

The TSB investigation found that no hand brakes were applied to the train, which accelerated beyond the maximum track speed set at 20 mph, causing the derailment. A new crew had just boarded the train and were not yet ready to depart when it began to move.<sup>28</sup>

Following the allegations of a cover-up by the CP Police Service in relation to the Field derailment, the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, which represents over 16,000 people in the rail industry, released a press release calling for an independent RCMP investigation. The Alberta Federation of Labour also released a statement demanding that an independent criminal investigation into CP Rail be undertaken immediately.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.bst-tsb.gc.ca/eng/medias-media/communiques/rail/2019/r18v0016-20190221.html>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.interior-news.com/news/train-derailment-in-smithers/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.burnslakelakesdistrictnews.com/news/b-c-train-derailment-that-killed-three-just-started-moving-on-its-own/>

The RCMP confirmed it will review TSB's investigation after a seven-month long investigation by the CBC, revealed evidence of a possible "cover up" by the railway company.<sup>29</sup> In response to the CBC investigation, TSB released a statement saying the investigation was thorough and followed procedure.<sup>30</sup>

*CBC Investigation probing recent rail disasters, crude oil derailments, deaths for possible negligence*  
posted Mar 06, 2020<sup>31</sup>

Public police forces are choosing not to investigate major accidents at CN and Canadian Pacific Railway, including recent crude oil train crashes and deadly derailments, a CBC News investigation into Canada's rail system has found.<sup>32</sup>

Instead, the RCMP, Ontario Provincial Police and other forces routinely defer to little-known federal railway police run by CP and CN, leaving the companies to investigate themselves with no outside police looking into potential criminal negligence.

It's infuriated some families of workers killed on the railways who claim a "double standard" where outside police are willing to move in to clear blockades along Canada's rail lines but routinely don't investigate rail corporations in the event of major disasters or fatalities.

"It makes me angry," said Tara Jijian, whose husband was killed working at CP's rail yard in Regina. "Because the blockades and protests affect the economy somewhat, everybody rushes to make sure that....this has to be dealt with," said Jijian. "But when it's a person that is killed on those same railway tracks, the police just absolutely refuse to get involved."

Instead, outside police defer to the railways, which since the 19th century have employed their own fully authorized federal police forces, which have all the powers of regular police. But unlike public police, rail police lack any civilian oversight, are paid for by private companies and are not governed by any formal police act.

CBC has uncovered a string of recent major rail crashes where no police force of any kind stepped in - or only railway company police investigated — leaving what some say is a vacuum of accountability when it comes to potential criminal negligence on Canada's rail lines.

In three recent derailments that leaked millions of litres of crude oil in Saskatchewan and Ontario, no police agencies investigated, CBC has found.

In early December, when 33 tanker cars crashed and exploded southeast of Saskatoon, CP Railway said their police service did not investigate and referred inquiries to the RCMP. "The RCMP has been involved and has jurisdiction," a CP spokesperson said. "I'm not totally sure where you are getting your information," the RCMP told CBC, pointing back to CP police and the Transportation Safety Board as the lead agencies.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.thegoldenstar.net/news/rcmp-to-review-fatal-field-train-derailment-investigation-after-evidence-points-to-cover-up/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.bst-tsb.gc.ca/eng/medias-media/decl-stat/2020/20200128.html>

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<sup>32</sup> [Dave Seglins, Joseph Loiero](#) : CBC News, Posted: Mar 06, 2020: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/rail-accidents-investigations-1.5486897>

Two months later, just seven kilometres down the same CP rail line, a second crude oil train derailed and exploded, forcing evacuation of the hamlet of Guernsey.

In northern Ontario, neither Ontario Provincial Police nor CN Police are investigating the derailment of an oil train near Fort Frances on Feb. 18, 2020, involving 26 crude oil tanker cars, CBC has confirmed.

Unlike in a highway car crash where police investigate, in rail a crash the Transportation Safety Board is the agency with the responsibility of probing causes and coming up with safety recommendations. But the TSB does not lay charges and said it is not "legally competent to assign fault."

This finger pointing and jurisdictional dodge ball means that in Canada, public police forces seldom — if ever — investigate failures by railways in major disasters, including after a runaway train in the B.C. mountains last winter that killed three crew members.

A lawyer for the families of Jamie Jijian, who was killed in CP's Regina yard in 2012, and Kevin Timmerman, who was killed in CN's Saskatoon yard in 2015, is going to court to challenge the railway police system.

"The problem is that it puts an elite group of corporations above the law," said Tavengwa Runyowa, who filed a constitutional challenge last month after seeing a documentary by CBC's *The Fifth Estate* on the B.C. derailment case.

"We are concerned with what appears to be a double standard in how the RCMP responds to railway policing incidents," ... "When Canada's railway companies need assistance, for example policing the Wet'suwet'en protests and their supporters, the RCMP readily intervenes," wrote Runyowa.

"However, when there is a workplace death, derailment, oil spill or other railway incident that may be attributable to railway companies themselves, the RCMP defers to the private police forces that the companies fund and control."

*18 February 2019 A man was flown to Vancouver for emergency treatment after a CN container train struck a road grader at the Quick Station Road crossing near Telkwa BC.*<sup>33</sup> The intersection is controlled with a stop sign. The track bends around trees as it follows the Bulkley River not far from the site of the crash.

The grader operator was badly hurt and had to be extricated by rescue personnel from Smithers and Telkwa. He was taken to Bulkley Valley District Hospital in critical condition, and then quickly airlifted to Vancouver.

*18 July 2019 CN train derailment between Prince Rupert and Terrace BC*

The derailment involved a locomotive and three cars carrying wood pellets, according to CN spokesperson Alexandre Boulé.<sup>34</sup> "One of the wood pellet railcars spilled some of its content and CN crews are cleaning up the area," Boulé says. "There are no dangerous goods involved, no fires reported and there is no danger to the public or to the environment."

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.interior-news.com/news/one-in-hospital-after-train-hits-grader-near-smithers/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.terracestandard.com/news/cn-train-derailment-between-terrace-and-prince-rupert/>

The train crew suffered minor injuries. The cause is unknown, and CN is investigating. There were minor delays on Hwy 16 and VIA passenger train service between Prince Rupert and Terrace was interrupted.

*7 January 2020 CN train derailment near Kitwanga BC*

Information supplied to the federal TSB from CN indicated 34 covered hopper cars containing wood pellets heading westbound went off the tracks close to the village.



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“There is no threat to public safety as no dangerous goods are involved and there are no fires or injuries and no product has entered the adjacent Skeena River,” CN added “The cause of the derailment is under investigation.” “The area experienced a heavy snowfall last Friday and continuing into the weekend, presenting a challenge for crews clearing right-of-way.”

The Gitxsan Huwilp Government says it’s concerned about the impact of a train derailment in its territory. Simogyet (Hereditary Chief) Simidik Calvin Heizims says he’s worried about the derailment’s impacts on the Skeena, including sedimentation from the disturbed soils and damage to riparian vegetation.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://tsb.gc.ca/eng/enquetes-investigations/rail/2020/R20V0005/R20V0005.html>

“Though the impacts may seem minor in nature, there is potential for far more environmental damage to occur during the clean-up efforts, sometimes far exceeding the derailment impact itself,” says Simogyet Simidik in a news release.<sup>36</sup>

The TSB investigation<sup>37</sup> found the train comprised 2 locomotives and 90 loaded cars. It was 6160 feet long and weighed 11 915 tons. This train operates daily, originating in Smithers and terminating in Prince Rupert.

Noting two similar recent derailments in the Bulkley Subdivision, the TSB stated that loaded high-capacity rail cars in unit trains pose special problems to the rails and wood track structure. A loaded unit train consist is usually uniform, with all cars of the same design and loading. This will typically concentrate the impacts in the irregularities in the track structure.

The TSB’s Safety message: Given the annual tonnage on the Bulkley Subdivision and the frequency of loaded unit train operations, it is likely that bulk unit train traffic accelerated the development and deterioration of the track. Emerging wide-gauge conditions can progress quickly, particularly on track where bulk unit trains operate, making increased inspection and timely repairs a necessity for safe railway operations.

*14 January 2020 Runaway rail car in Field on same rail line as fatal 2019 derailment<sup>38</sup>*

A runaway train car carrying grain through Field was recently reported to the TSB by CP Rail. “CP can confirm a single rail car containing grain was involved in an uncontrolled movement in Field, B.C., on Jan. 14, 2020,” said Salem Woodrow, a media relations person for CP Rail. The incident comes nearly a year after a train derailment near Field killed three CP workers on Feb. 4, 2019.

*5 March 2020 CN train derailed east of Prince George BC forcing a school evacuation*

A CN derailment that forced a school evacuation near Prince George included seven cars carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), an extremely flammable, dangerous product, according to the TSB. Twenty-eight cars went off the tracks.<sup>39</sup>

The ongoing TSB investigation had two investigators at the derailment site on the CN main line, about 44 kilometres east of Prince George in Giscome. CN did not reply to repeated requests to identify the contents of all the cars. Giscome Elementary School is just 200 metres from the railway line and students and teachers were evacuated immediately.

TSB spokesperson Alex Fournier said investigators have determined 28 cars derailed, including 20 carrying petroleum coke, seven with liquefied petroleum gas, and one carrying methanol, which remained upright. Petroleum coke was spilled into a nearby creek. Transport Canada's website says

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.cfnr.ca/2020/01/08/gitxsan-worried-about-derailment-impact-on-skeena-river/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://tsb.gc.ca/eng/rapports-reports/rail/2020/r20v0005/r20v0005.html>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.thegoldenstar.net/news/runaway-rail-car-reported-to-safety-officials-one-year-after-fatal-b-c-train-derailment/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cn-derailment-dangerous-goods-school-evacuated-1.5491822>

liquefied petroleum gas, also known as LPG or propane, is extremely flammable, easily ignited by heat and able to form explosive mixtures when mixed with air.

The B.C. Ministry of Environment says CN responders have begun cleanup of an estimated 42 tonnes of petroleum coke which spilled in the vicinity of Hay Creek. A containment boom is also being deployed in the creek, the Ministry said.



Giscome Elementary School remained closed. A spokesperson said students would be bussed to another school until the rail site is cleaned up.

*12 May 2020 A CN train derailed near Burns Lake.*<sup>40</sup> There were nine cars carrying coal that went off the tracks, causing the coal to spill. However, the spillage has not reached a nearby water body, officials said.

*27 April 2020 CN train derailment in Prince Rupert BC*

Reports on April 27, of a derailed train in Prince Rupert, were received at *The Northern View*.<sup>41</sup> The freight cars, with double level containers, are positioned across five tracks at the waterfront near Bill Murray Drive. The container cars are in an upright position across portions of intersecting track in a zig-zag formation. The cars which are off the tracks appear to be the last few cars on the train. It is unknown at this time what contents the cars are carrying, or if any injuries were sustained in the derailment.

*15 June 2020 CN conductor died on the job in Port Edward BC*<sup>42</sup>

Port Edward death is second in BC in 15 days, Teamsters Union said. The train conductor had only recently been posted in the Prince Rupert area and was based in Smithers. He had been with CN since 2018.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.interior-news.com/news/coal-train-derails-near-burns-lake/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.thenorthernview.com/news/train-derailment-in-prince-rupert/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.thenorthernview.com/news/cn-confirms-employee-death-on-property/>

“This is the second CN conductor to die on the job this month in B.C. Another conductor died on June 1 in Surrey,” Teamsters said, “Both workers were performing “switching operations,” a term that refers to activities like making up and marshalling trains, storing cars, serving industries within rail terminals, and other related activities.

According to Teamsters a total of twelve railroaders have died on the job in the past two and a half years. “This shouldn’t have happened...Most times in most professions (accidents) are preventable. Clearly there are things that need to change. Probably training is one of them...” Zellner said. The Transportation Safety Board is aware of the accident.