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## **DEPARTMENT OF FIRE**

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**Stephanie A. Miner, Mayor**

Good afternoon, Chairman Lummis, Chairman Broun, Ranking Members Swalwell and Maffei of the Energy and Oversight Committee. I am Deputy Chief Mark Zoanetti of the Syracuse Fire Department in New York. My fire service experience began in 1979 as a volunteer firefighter and I have served as a career firefighter since in Syracuse since 1985. For much of my career I have been a member or supervisor of the Syracuse Fire Department's Hazardous Materials response team. I am currently responsible for the Special Operations Division. This division includes hazardous materials response, the airport, rescue services which include Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) components of building collapse, trench rescue, confined space and rope rescue.

I am here on behalf of the City of Syracuse at the request of Congressman Maffei. I want to thank you for allowing me to share my experience in dealing with hazardous materials in rail transportation and the challenges that first responders face on a daily basis.

As a joint effort between the Syracuse Fire Department and the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management, we contacted CSX for information about Bakken Crude. Initially shipment information was not made available. With persistence and pressure from State and Local government, CSX agreed to meet with the Syracuse F.D. and the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management to discuss the movement of Bakken Crude. In the meeting we received information about shipments and hazards associated with Bakken crude. We were able to establish a dialog with CSX that eventually brought educational resources to first responders.

With information about light sweet crude, we made hazard assessments to determine what if any gaps existed in our response plans to an accident involving Bakken crude trains. It was determined that additional training and planning were two key components in dealing with these hazards. Because of the lower ignition temperature of this crude, as compared to other crude shipments, the hazard has increased. In reviewing the incidents in Lac-Megantic, Quebec and Casselton, North Dakota and information from several sources we recognized the additional hazard of transportation of Bakken Crude. We were advised that the rail lines that run along the northern border of our City are being utilized for the movement of this product. The CSX lines border Onondaga Lake at its southern most end and adjacent to Destiny USA, a large shopping and entertainment center. The rail proceeds past the William F. Walsh Regional

Transportation Center, a minor league ballpark and past a light industrial area. Once out of the City's jurisdiction the trains move to the rail yards in East Syracuse, a village on the eastern border.

Following the issuance of an emergency order from the United States Department of Transportation that required railroad carriers to release information in writing to State Emergency Response Center (SERC) in each state in which railroad carriers operate trains transporting 1,000,000 gallons or more of Bakken crude, CSX disseminated information of commodities transported through Central New York. The data from the 2013 Hazardous Materials Density Study for Onondaga County reported the number of car loads and percentage of total hazardous material that is transported through the County. The Bakken crude comprised the greatest share of haz-mat transported at 34% of the total. We found that many other hazardous materials were transported through the City of Syracuse. We have known for a long time that these commodities moved through the City, but were unaware of the amounts. There are large quantities of liquefied petroleum gases, sulfuric acid, propane, chlorine and ethanol to name a few. There are shorter rail lines that traverse through downtown that also move tank and bulk products.

Bakken crude is moved through Central New York by rail every day. There are two trains that daily traverse Syracuse with approximately 100 tank cars in each train. When concerns for the potential hazards of this commodity were brought to light, that these trains were in our community, we had very little information about the shipment outside of the media reports.

With this information in hand we determined a course of action. Training became the next step in our progression. A training program supplied by CSX was presented to our members that contained DVD lessons that matched a workbook on dealing with rail emergencies. After the completion of these lessons, CSX brought their Safety Train program to Syracuse for Hands-On Training with DOT 111 type tank cars. A total of 60 members of the Syracuse Fire Department attended this hands-on training. Those members are assigned to stations that would respond to a rail incident such as Bakken crude trains. Participants in this training included our Hazardous Material Unit. The balance of our Department will receive awareness training for rail incidents this fall.

From the perspective of the Syracuse Fire Department, the Bakken Crude Oil trains do not represent the only challenge for first responders. The vast arrays of other hazardous materials that move through our jurisdiction require us to be prepared for all hazards. A single chlorine rail car release could be as catastrophic as a crude oil incident. The Syracuse Fire Department Hazardous Material Unit must train and equip to deal with whatever comes our way. Besides rail incidents, we must be prepared to handle fixed facilities and highway accidents. We are establishing procedures for dealing with the Bakken Crude oil shipments at the present. However, I am confident we are prepared to respond should an incident happen. Because of the potential for a transportation accident, we train to meet all hazards. The Syracuse Fire Department is also working with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to help protect the public from an incident.

In November 2011, a train derailed in a residential area of the City. Several tank and dry bulk hopper cars derailed. The tank cars carried non-odorized propane. Because of the potential hazard approximately 100 people were evacuated from their homes. This also caused the closure of a main highway, Interstate Rt. 81. The origin of this incident was determined to be a bad section of track. The deficient section of track was identified in July of that year but was not repaired. The section of track that caused the derailment was in the middle of the City; causing the cars to be dragged for up to a mile further before overturning. Fortunately there was not a release of propane. The cars were eventually righted without further incident.

The City and County have created a stock pile of firefighting foams and are acquiring appliances to deliver the foam at an incident. Additionally, with the production from an ethanol plant in nearby City of Fulton, we are finding large quantities of ethanol being transported in Central New York. The County has acquired two 275 gallon totes of foam concentrate that will be compatible with alcohol type releases. The Syracuse Airport has a foam trailer with 1000 gallons of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) that is primarily for resupply in the event of an aircraft fire. It is available and can be brought into the City for a rail incident if needed. This supply of firefighting foam is a good start; however it would not support a long term incident.

The Hazardous Material team of the Syracuse Fire Department is comprised of 36 highly trained Haz-Mat Technicians. The members meet or exceed the standards for training set forth by CFR 29 1910.120 and NFPA 472. All Haz-Mat Company officers as well as all Chief Officers of the Syracuse Fire Department are trained in Hazardous Materials Incident Command. The Syracuse Fire Department Haz-Mat team is a regional response team for a three County area in Central New York. We are a FEMA Type I team, the only team in our region. We have responded outside of our area as part of New York State mutual aid assets for natural disaster that have affected the State.

At a time when increasing demands for many emergency services are becoming more complex, local resources can become financially strapped very quickly. The assistance from State, Federal resources and shippers could provide for responder training, development of effective response capabilities, and planning to be able to safely mitigate an incident and protect the public from harm.

Thank you for holding today's public meeting about the transportation of Bakken Petroleum and rail safety. The hazards of this product are not unlike others but because of the volume that is moved across America through many small communities it creates a tremendous concern. Should an accident happen similar to the ones that have already occurred, local resources will quickly be overextended. To be able to protect the public, emergency response agencies will need the tools to respond and mitigate accidents. The prevention of accidents should also be on the forefront of this endeavor whether through engineered controls, track maintenance, or making the product safer in transportation.