

CCRA INFORMATION PIECE REGARDING RAILROAD TANK CARS ALONG THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER

As we walk around our neighborhood, we frequently see trains moving down the tracks on the east side of the Schuylkill or freight cars, including tank cars, parked on the sidings. A number of members have raised questions about safety issues, particularly concerning transport of oil and chemicals. We did some research and learned the following:

- The tracks are owned and operated by CSX Corporation, one of the four large freight railroads in the U. S. CSX acquired the tracks from Conrail in 1998.
- CSX is regulated by the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT). The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the City government do not have regulatory authority over CSX or its rights of way.
- DOT issued a regulation last year requiring that all oil being produced in the Bakken area (the source of most oil coming to Philadelphia) be tested before it is loaded for transport. There are specific requirements for safe transport depending on test results.
- DOT has required railroads to transport oil in doubled hulled tank cars (a tank inside a tank). Railroads have until 2017 to meet this requirement. They are phasing out single hulled tank cars as they receive replacements. An estimated 60% of tank cars currently in service are double hulled.
- CSX has created a web site, Secure Now, which City agencies can access. It details the schedule for freight traffic moving through the City and the types of cargo on specific trains. If an incident occurred, this information would be invaluable to the Philadelphia Fire Department, the lead agency to respond.
- If the Fire Department needed assistance from other City agencies, the State or Federal Government, the City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) would secure their participation.
- OEM would also provide updates to the public, instructing citizens on how to stay safe. They might ask us to shelter in place. If there was a need to evacuate a specific area, they would open nearby shelters outside the area.
- OEM has an emergency plan that covers more common emergencies (water main breaks, blizzards, hurricanes), as well as derailments.