

# Wisconsin Environmental Initiative: Wisconsin rail safety activist calls for strengthened safety requirements for trains involved in transporting hazardous materials

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 5, 2023

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MADISON: Sarah Zarling, an organizer, researcher and Founder of Citizens Acting for Rail Safety in Watertown, WI is in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, Canada this week to participate in events marking the 10th anniversary of the Lac-Mégantic runaway oil train disaster.

On July 6, 2013, at 1:15 a.m., a runaway unit oil train of 72 tank cars filled with Bakken crude from North Dakota rolled down a hill and into the downtown core where 63 tankers derailed. Many punctured and spilled over 1.5 million gallons of oil, causing a series of fires and explosions, and the flaming oil flowed through the heart of town, spilling into the Chaudière River, and incinerating everything in its path, including 47 people.

“I am thankful to finally be able to visit Lac-Mégantic and participate in events to remember the victims and support the survivors of that apocalyptic night,” said Zarling. “We need to strengthen safety requirements for trains involved in transporting hazardous materials to reduce the risk of accidents, improve emergency response capabilities and enhance the overall safety and health of workers, our communities and the environment”.

This trip is also an important opportunity to increase visibility to the preventable rail disaster and subsequent poisoning of the community of East Palestine, Ohio on

February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Just as in Lac Mégantic, it was a preventable disaster that forever changed the town, and they still don't have any real answers or justice. In East Palestine, some residents are still sick and displaced from their homes, and there is no end in sight.

To see Sarah's recent op-eds on Railway Safety please see the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative:

<https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2023/06/20/railway-safety-act-will-reduce-threats-to-our-communities-protect-the-environment/> and The Capital

Times: [https://captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-railway-safety-act-reduces-threats-protects-the-environment/article\\_5487f3cc-1584-563c-a05f-20f791d62fdd.html](https://captimes.com/opinion/guest-columns/opinion-railway-safety-act-reduces-threats-protects-the-environment/article_5487f3cc-1584-563c-a05f-20f791d62fdd.html)

Lac-Mégantic is organizing various activities from July 4 -8 to commemorate the train derailment that killed 47 people in 2013, including music concerts, a memorial mass, and a silent march at 1:15 am on July 6th — the time of the derailment 10 years ago.

Wisconsin Environmental Initiative (WEI) is sponsoring Sarah Zarling's trip to Lac-Mégantic in support of our need for a clean economy that works for all and moves beyond subsidized fossil fuel and petrochemical industries that threaten our communities and the planet.

For more details about WEI's initiatives, please visit [www.weigogreener.org](http://www.weigogreener.org).