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**U.S. Department of Transportation Issues Crude Oil by Rail Safety Regulations**

On May 1, U.S. Secretary of the Department of Transportation Anthony Foxx, with Canadian Transport Minister Lisa Raitt, announced highly anticipated [final regulations on shipping flammable liquids by rail](#). Notably, these rules not only apply to shipments of crude oil by rail but also to ethanol shipping.

The joint country announcement highlights how integrated the North American rail network is with both countries. Canada announced its own safety standards, which align with the United States' standards.

The need for safety regulations has increased in the past few years after a spate of dangerous explosions and crashes involving the oil tank cars mired the railways. The initial proposal for the rules was issued in July 2014.

The final rules include a construction standard for new tank cars and a separate standard for cars that have been retrofitted, as well as a timeline to phase out older cars beginning in January 2018. The new construction standards include a requirement that tank cars have steel walls that are 9/16 inch thick and have thermal protection. The timeline for compliance ranges from three to five years, depending on the type of flammable liquid being transported and the current condition of the car.

The rules make permanent the current policy that older model tank cars travel no more than 40 mph and all crude-by-rail service be restricted to 50 mph. There is also a requirement that railroads use electronically controlled pneumatic brakes within eight years. Other standards in the new safety rule include routing requirements, operational protocol for sharing information with local government agencies, and testing requirements to improve the classification of energy products being transported.

Elsewhere in the federal government, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Energy are all coordinating with the White House to improve safety of shipping flammable liquids by rail.

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