Fiery Train Derailment Leads to Evacuation

the Associated Press

TISKILWA, Ill. (AP) — A freight train loaded with ethanol crashed and exploded Friday, sending up bright orange flames and plumes of smoke that could be seen miles away and forcing the evacuation of a small town in northern Illinois.

Capt. Steve Haywood of the Ottawa Fire Department said the train's tanker cars were shipping ethanol for Decatur-based corn processor Archer Daniels Midland, and possibly other materials and chemicals, when it crashed and derailed. At least six tanker cars were burning, he said.

There was no immediate about any injuries. Authorities said evacuees from Tiskilwa, a village of about 800 people about 100 miles west of Chicago, are being taken to a nearby high school.

Witnesses reported hearing explosions, and the glow from the fire could be seen from miles away.

"There's a lot of fire and big flames," said Amanda Knight, who told the Chicago Sun-Times that the train derailed about 500 feet from her home.

Knight said she heard several explosions coming from the accident scene.

"It sounds like a jet coming over the town. That's all I can compare it to," she said.

Twenty-six cars on the 131-car train derailed, including seven to nine loaded with ethanol, according to Mick Burkart, chief operating officer of Iowa Interstate Railroad. The fire prevented officials from immediately getting close enough to the train to determine what caused the accident, Burkhart said.

Burkart would not confirm whether the ethanol was being shipped for ADM, saying he does not discuss his railroad's customers.

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