

Freight Rail and Chemicals: Safely Moving a Commodity that Makes Modern Life Possible

From the soap in your bathroom to the box your online delivery came in, chemicals help make modern life possible.

The category “chemicals” consists of thousands of distinct products, including plastics, synthetic fibers, drugs and soaps. From the chlorine that purifies our drinking water to the fertilizers that help grow our food, chemicals make modern life possible.

Freight rail plays an integral role in safely and efficiently transporting agriculture fertilizers to Midwest farmers, plastic resins to automotive manufacturers, caustic soda to pulp and paper manufacturers, and countless other chemical products to intermediaries and end users. This efficient and reliable service ensures that chemical producers and consumers maintain their competitiveness here and abroad.

Current Stats: In 2016, U.S. Class I railroads moved 2.1 million carloads of chemicals (7.6% of total carloads) carrying 174.4 million tons (11.6% of total tons) and earning gross revenue of \$9.9 billion (15.1% of total revenue).

At a Glance

- **Serving Many Customers**

Many plants are concentrated in the Gulf States (where petroleum and natural gas raw materials are readily available), the Delaware Valley and the Midwest. The top chemical producing states — including Texas, California, Louisiana, North Carolina, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, New York, Pennsylvania and Iowa — account for approximately 66% of total U.S. chemical production.

- **Mixed Tonnage**

Ethanol is the highest-volume chemical carried by U.S. railroads. Plastic materials and synthetic resins account for around 26% of rail tonnage. Most of the remaining amount consists of fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals.

- **Safely Moving Hazmat**

Some chemicals are considered hazardous. More than 99.999% of all hazmat moved annually by rail reaches its destination without a release caused by an incident.