

# Freight Rail and Energy: Safely Moving Coal, Ethanol and Crude Oil

---

Railroads have helped power America since its earliest days. In fact, the first big haul for America's first major railroad was transporting coal from western Maryland and Virginia to Baltimore.

In the years since, the role of railroads in the energy industry has continued to grow. As energy sources and consumption patterns have changed, the freight rail industry has worked diligently to adjust to customer needs and ensure that the commodities that power America continue to move safely and efficiently. The push for U.S. energy independence from foreign sources of fossil fuel relies extensively on freight rail as an important transportation partner. Railroads are an essential contributor to the success of the crude oil industry.

**Current Stats:** In 2017, U.S. Class I railroads moved approximately 5.3 million carloads of energy products (17% of total carloads) carrying 591 million tons (35% of total tons) and earning gross revenue of \$14.2 billion (20% of total revenue).

---

## At a Glance

- **Coal**

Railroads haul nearly 70% of U.S. coal to its destination — enough to power 78% of American homes. In 2016, U.S. railroads moved 4.4 million carloads of coal, with each rail car carrying enough coal to power 21 homes for an entire year.

- **Ethanol**

Railroads account for up to 70% of ethanol movement in the U.S. Each of the seven U.S. Class I railroads transport ethanol, with some serving several dozen plants.

- **Crude Oil**

Technological advances have led to a surge in U.S. crude oil production, moving the United States towards greater energy independence for the first time in decades. Rail is an essential transportation partner.