

Updates from East Palestine Response

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio – Today, the U.S. EPA published the first response newsletter [East Palestine Train Derailment Response Newsletter, 03-21-2023 \(pdf\)](#) (710.17 KB) for communities in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The newsletter will also be mailed to area residents.

This week, the Unified Command has prepared for a significant rain event forecasted for the East Palestine area on Friday. Response workers dug a bypass trench at the derailment site to divert rainwater runoff. Two large storage tanks were also constructed to store runoff for transport and disposal.

EPA has reviewed preliminary data from some of the soil sampling related to the controlled burn that occurred during response actions to the train derailment in East Palestine. While final results will be available in the coming weeks, EPA's review of the preliminary data indicates levels of semi-volatile organic chemicals and dioxins in the samples are similar to typical background levels.

EPA will hold the next community open house on Thursday from 6-8 p.m. at East Palestine High School. EPA staff will be available at booths to discuss soil sampling and other information about the response.

A look at the week ahead:

At the derailment site:

- Increased truck traffic along designated trucking routes
- Taggart Street is still closed to the public
- Continued excavation and construction work at the site
- Trucks continue to take soil off site
- Two street sweepers will continue around truck traffic, and crews continue to clean trucks before leaving the site

In the greater community:

- Air monitoring continues at 23 locations around the community
- EPA's Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) mobile laboratory will continue to sample
- Soil sampling crews in right of ways:
 - Crews made up of 4-5 people wearing high visibility safety vests and scooping soil into jars
 - If your property is nearby the sampling area and the sampling crew sees signs of soot or ash, a member of the sampling team may ask to sample your property
- River agitation and aeration will continue

Response By the Numbers

- **7,784 tons est. of contaminated soil shipped (+983 tons from yesterday)**
- **7.5 million est. gallons of liquid wastewater shipped (+111,314 million gallons from yesterday)**
- **621 indoor air screenings**
- **The Welcome Center has received 365 visitors**

Soil Removal at the Derailment Site

Soil removal continues at the derailment site and approximately 7,784 tons of contaminated soil has shipped to

disposal facilities. Work at the site includes removing tracks in sections, and removing soil and placing it in a staging area for disposal. Soil removal continues on the south track rail area; planning for the north track rail removal is underway. During the soil removal process, Norfolk Southern, with EPA oversight, will conduct soil sampling beneath the excavated rail track.

Liquid Waste Removal

Wastewater is collected to ensure water does not leave the derailment site or staging piles of contaminated soil. Wastewater is generated after rain falls on contaminated soil and is collected and from cleaning and washing trucks before they leave site. An estimated 7.5 million gallons of wastewater has been shipped offsite to appropriate disposal facilities.

Soil Sampling

EPA and Norfolk Southern contractors continue to take soil samples at agricultural, commercial, recreational and residential properties in both Ohio and Pennsylvania. To date, 97 properties have been sampled. This soil sampling effort will help identify if contaminants, including SVOCs and dioxins, are present and may have been caused by the train derailment.

Preliminary soil sample results are coming back from the lab – this information will be shared with property owners and the public after quality checks are complete.

Air Quality

To date, 621 indoor air screenings have been conducted. Air monitoring continues 24/7 at 23 stations throughout the community. No detections of vinyl chloride or hydrogen chloride have been identified.

During the soil removal at the derailment site, EPA and independent contractors are conducting air monitoring within the work zone and throughout the surrounding community. This includes continuous air monitoring and sampling at the site and throughout the community as well as the use of EPA's Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) mobile laboratory which is conducting an air monitoring route near the soil excavation area. EPA does not anticipate exceedances of levels of health concern as a result of the soil removal work.

See operational updates from other agencies supporting this incident response below.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- FEMA has been working closely with the state since the beginning of this incident and has been in constant contact regarding emergency operations since February 4—less than 12 hours after the train derailment.
- In total, FEMA deployed 70 personnel to help coordinate this multiagency effort and get the people of East Palestine connected to critical information and resources.
- Specifically, FEMA recently supported Interagency Community Outreach teams with door-to-door outreach in the affected area, sharing valuable information with residents and businesses.
- These teams engaged with affected residents in the community and more than 2,200 flyers were distributed to individuals or dropped off at their homes and businesses.

Department of Transportation (DOT) & National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

- DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) announced today that over \$25M is available for projects that will train first responders, strengthen safety programs, improve safety, reduce environmental impacts, and educate the public on local safety initiatives. This includes projects that provide support to state inspectors for hazardous materials shipments and pipelines inspections, important safety training and educational programs for emergency response, and advance innovative safety technologies.
- PHMSA recently urged all railroad operators to create and maintain emergency response plans for the

transport of hazardous materials, strengthen the accessibility of the AskRail system, and inform PHMSA when they identify responders who are not able to access PHMSA's grant-funded training. Read the [PHMSA Safety Advisory Notice: Railroad Emergency Preparedness](#).

- NTSB, an independent federal agency, is leading the investigation into the cause of the derailment. Read [NTSBs recently issued an Investigative Update](#) with factual findings on their investigation on the ground.
- Within hours of the derailment, staff from the Federal Railroad Administration and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration staff were on the scene to support the NTSB investigation.
- Upon completion of the investigation, DOT will use all relevant authorities to ensure accountability and improve safety.
- DOT is demanding immediate actions from the Class I railroads, announcing continued and expanded action from DOT, and calling on Congress to take actions that will hold the industry accountable.

Norfolk Southern Corporation

- For daily updates community members can view the Norfolk Southern website <https://nsmakingitright.com/>.

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