

# EPA Approves Norfolk Southern Plan for Soil Sampling in East Palestine and Nearby Pennsylvania areas, EPA to Hold Resource Fair

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio –On March 7, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved Norfolk Southern’s plan for sampling soil. Sampling agricultural properties is a high priority given the upcoming planting season for area farmers. Norfolk Southern will shortly begin to take soil samples in the locations most likely to have been impacted by the fires at the derailment site and the plume, with the first preliminary results expected in the coming days. This includes agricultural, residential, commercial, and recreational properties in both Ohio and Pennsylvania. EPA’s own contractors will also be taking a number of samples at the same locations as Norfolk Southern to confirm the accuracy of the railroad’s results. EPA will work closely with the USDA and state agriculture departments, as well as health agencies, to conduct the field work, interpret the results and will expedite sharing the information with farmers and the broader community.

EPA personnel have been on the ground since the onset of the train derailment, working alongside federal, state, and local partners [with response efforts](#).

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

## Operational Updates:

### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- EPA will hold a resource fair for the community March 9, from 6-9 p.m. at East Palestine School Gym, 360 West Grant Street. The community is invited to attend and learn more about what each of these organizations are doing as part of the East Palestine Train Derailment response. The resource fair is an opportunity for residents to talk face-to-face with representatives from several agencies, including:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Columbiana County Health District
  - Norfolk Southern
  - Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
  - Pennsylvania Department of Health
  - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- EPA’s community welcome center at 25 North Market Street continues to be open to the community from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.

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

### Health and Human Services (HHS) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)

- CDC/ATSDR continues to conduct Assessment of Chemical Exposure (ACE) investigation surveys of derailment first responders. As of Wednesday morning, 130 have been completed.
- Agency teams continue to process ACE investigation surveys for area residents, who have submitted 304 to date.

- CDC/ATSDR staff will participate in tomorrow's EPA resource fair at East Palestine School and answer questions from residents.

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

- DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (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. The full advisory can be found [here](#).
- NTSB, an independent federal agency, is leading the investigation into the cause of the derailment. NTSB recently issued an Investigative Update with factual findings on their investigation on the ground: <https://www.nts.gov/news/press-releases/Pages/NR20230214.aspx>
- 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.
- More information here: <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/us-department-transportation-fact-sheet-steps-forward-freight-rail-industry-safety>
- USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is issuing a Safety Bulletin following a recent incident that involved a serious injury to a rail worker. The Bulletin is intended to raise increase awareness of the hazards relating to switching cars and the role that operating rules, job briefings, communications and situational awareness play in ensuring switching operations are conducted safely.

#### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- FEMA currently has 13 personnel deployed to support EPA and the federal response effort through operational coordination, logistical planning and unity of effort.
- 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. These teams have connected with every Ohio and Pennsylvania residence and business that local leaders and state officials have requested they visit.

#### Norfolk Southern Corporation

- Norfolk Southern has agreed to provide additional financial assistance that may include temporary lodging, travel, food, clothing, and other necessities. This assistance will be available to residents of the East Palestine area (including the portions of Pennsylvania within a mile of the derailment site). The relocation offer is completely voluntary and is being provided as an option and a resource to interested residents to ensure they feel comfortable throughout the track work. Residents who would like to take advantage of this offer should contact the NS resource hotline at (800) 230-7049 (24hr) or visit the Family Assistance Center at Abundant Life Church in New Waterford, OH.