

Update on Train Derailment – East Palestine, OH

The Incident

On February 3, 2023, in East Palestine OH, a Norfolk Southern train derailed. The tanker cars, carrying several types of chemicals, ruptured and caught fire.

Emergency Response teams from both US EPA and Ohio EPA responded quickly and took measures to contain potential contamination from these chemicals.

Vinyl chloride was released onto the soil at the site of the derailment, as well as into the air and nearby streams. The emergency response included establishing a series of containment measures to help limit environmental impact to local streams and rivers from water runoff from the site.

Low levels of butyl acrylate did reach the Ohio River through Little Beaver Creek, a small tributary located near the Ohio and Pennsylvania border.

In response to this event and Ohio River detections, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) developed Provision Health Guidance Values for drinking water. The current detections in the river are well below the ATSDR health values.

Ongoing Response/Ohio River Partners

Norfolk Southern (and its contractors) is responsible for environmental impacts from the derailment incident. Public agencies including Ohio River drinking water utilities, Ohio River boundary state agencies, US EPA, Ohio EPA, and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) are working to ensure public health and the environment is protected.

ORSANCO is using its strategic Organics Detection System (ODS) that is located along the entire length of the Ohio River.

State drinking water agencies from the six mainstem states including OH, WV, KY, IN, IL and PA are working closely with Ohio River drinking water utilities and have developed precautionary treatment strategies to help remove butyl acrylate through the water treatment process.

ORSANCO and other agencies are actively sampling the Ohio River at strategic locations to detect levels of butyl acrylate and to determine when it will arrive at drinking water intakes along the Ohio River.

This allows for a potential closing of the intakes to allow the majority of the chemical to pass. This strategy, combined with enhanced treatment will help ensure the safety of their drinking water supply.

Butyl acrylate gives off an odor at extremely low levels and may be smelled by customers.

The Spill & Henderson Water Utility

As of this morning (2/14), the forward edge of the plume is approximately 550 miles upstream. Whatever remaining concentration there is will reach us the latter part of next week.

We currently employ and actively feed powdered activated carbon, which is an effective mitigation chemical for contaminants of this type. With it being a volatile organic compound (VOC) we expect it to be non-detectable by the time it would reach our area.

That being stated, we will be in constant communication with ORSANCO and upstream municipalities so as to appropriately monitor and prepare responsibly.

As our customers, you should not notice any impact on the quality or supply of fresh, clean, high-quality H₂O.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at 270-826-2421