

EPA Emergency Response Site Update
Stillwater Train Derailment
June 26, 2023, Operation Period 3

[Website](#)

Site Description

On June 24, 2023, EPA received a report of a rail car incident located near Reed Point, MT, approximately 40 miles west of Billings, MT. Montana Rail Link reported the Twin Bridges bridge collapse. 17 cars of 52 total cars in that line were derailed. 10 cars entered the Yellowstone River under the Twin Bridges bridge. The 17 affected rail cars contained sodium hydrosulfide, asphalt liquified petroleum, molten sulfur, and scrap metal. The quantity of the contents in the rail cars varies but is typically in the thousands of gallons.

Representatives from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), local Law Enforcement, Fire Department, Fish & Wildlife Services (FWS) and Montana Disaster & Emergency Services (DES) have arrived on scene to participate in the Unified Command Structure. EPA has deployed an On Scene Coordinator, along with technical (START) contractors who will provide additional support and help coordinate environmental assessment and response activities with State and local officials.

Recent updates from the site indicate that cars containing molten sulfur and asphalt liquified petroleum appear to be releasing contents into the Yellowstone River. Notifications to downstream users have been made. Users are taking preventive measures and immediate downstream access is closed to boat traffic. Yellowstone County Sheriff's office has confirmed that there is no immediate threat to Yellowstone County and precautions are being put in place.

Site Objectives

- Participate in Unified Command.
- Stabilize rail cars containing sodium hydrosulfide and transfer contents from impacted cars.
- Document response activities.
- Establish air monitoring near the work zone.

Operations Period Objectives

- Participate in Unified Command.
- Continue air monitoring near work zone.
- Stabilize impacted rail cars and contents for transfer off-site.
- Determine amount of molten sulfur and asphalt liquified petroleum released from cars and assess downstream impacts.

Operations Period Accomplishments

- The contents of both railcars containing sodium hydrosulfide, that were located on the west side of the bridge, have been successfully transferred into stable railcars and moved to safety.
- Construction teams removed the cars containing fertilizer and one asphalt car leaving four asphalt cars remaining on the eastern side of the bridge. These will be removed as cleanup efforts continue.
- A dive team has arrived on scene to gather more information about the condition of the ten cars in the river, including two that are submerged. The dive team's information will provide key information that will aid the effort to remove the cars in the river (six contain asphalt, three contain molten sulfur, and one contains scrap metal.)
- Asphalt globules have been detected downstream on the banks and in the body of the Yellowstone River. This solid waste is not water soluble and is not anticipated to impact water quality. Water quality testing results from Saturday show no detectable levels of petroleum hydrocarbons or sulfur and samples continue to be taken and analyzed. At this time, there are no known risks to public drinking water or private drinking water wells.

- Ongoing release of asphalt material was observed, and the Unified Command team is determining next steps to mitigate and address the release.



Photo of empty rail car that previously contained sodium hydrosulfide, bottom left, and the two new rail cars containing the sodium hydrosulfide.