

EPA Emergency Response Site Update
Stillwater Train Derailment
June 27, 2023, Operation Period 4

[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. The rail line includes 52 total cars; 17 cars 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) arrived on scene. 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 and users are taking preventative measures. The Yellowstone River is closed 1 mile upstream and 2.5 miles downstream of the derailment site to all public access. Yellowstone County Sheriff's office has confirmed that there is no immediate threat to Yellowstone County and precautions have been 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.
- Document response activities.
- Perform ambient air monitoring near the work zone.
- Remove liquid asphalt petroleum rail car from bridge/water.
- Heat and remove any remaining product in recovered rail cars.
- Rerail and remove liquid asphalt petroleum rail car on the east side of bridge.
- Determine amount of molten sulfur and asphalt liquified petroleum released from rail cars.
- Begin Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Team (SCAT) surveys of the response area.

Operations Period Accomplishments

- Construction crews removed two asphalt railcars from the water. Eight remain in the river.
- A temporary and localized sheen was observed on the western bank of the river immediately downstream from the remaining cars in the evening on 6/26/23. It is believed that the sheen was a result of the removal of the initial asphalt car from the river or the equipment brought in to remove the tank. We are taking proactive measures to deploy boom to reduce downstream impacts. Unified Command monitored the area where sheen was observed last night after the rail car was removed from the river. There is no visible sheen the afternoon of 6/27/23.
- Crews safely disassembled the west segment of the bridge and placed it on the west riverbank.

- Riprap has been delivered to the site and is currently being utilized to construct a causeway, or stable path, which is anticipated to be completed later this evening. Once that work has been completed crews will focus on removing the remaining tank cars in the river.
- Unified command continues to monitor and assess the ongoing release of asphalt material that has entered the river.

Public Meeting

- A public meeting regarding the derailment and response efforts will be held on Wednesday, June 28, at 7:00pm at the Columbus High School Gym, 433 N 3rd St, Columbus, MT 59019.
- If you have questions you would like to send in advance, please send them to EPA's Beth Archer at archer.elizabeth@epa.gov or 720-512-1917.
- For those unable to attend in person, the meeting will be hosted online and on the phone via the information below:
 - Zoom: <https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/86328279446>
 - Phone: 1-206-337-9723



West segment of the bridge resting on the west riverbank.



River crew providing safety protection.