

EPA Emergency Response Site Update

Stillwater Train Derailment

June 28, 2023, Operation Period 5

[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 remaining rail cars 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 Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) surveys of the response area.
- Communicate response information and status to stakeholders and the public.

Operations Period Accomplishments

- Construction crews removed another liquid asphalt petroleum rail car from the water and moved it into the temporary waiting area.
- National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) began inspecting all cars that are removed to determine if the rail cars have sufficient integrity to be heated and transloaded.
- Montana Rail Link's contractor began working on a temporary track for the three liquid asphalt petroleum rail cars on the bridge to be removed after transloading their cargo.

- CTEH conducted ambient and personal air monitoring in the work zones throughout the day and used the rapid assessment technique to survey the extent of product downstream.
- Olympus performed daily water sample collection at ten locations, including one background location and nine downstream locations.
- START performed documentation of site conditions and activities. On-site activities concluded early due to inclement weather.
- Unified Command held a public meeting at Columbus High School and online to communicate response information to the public.



Crews rigging a railcar for removal from river.



Liquid asphalt petroleum railcar moved into secondary containment.