

EPA Emergency Response Site Update

Stillwater Train Derailment

June 29, 2023, Operation Period 6

[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.
- Continue Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) surveys of the response area.

Operations Period Accomplishments

- Construction crews removed one asphalt railcar and a sulfur railcar from the water. Five remain in the river.
- Daily surface water sampling continued at thirteen downstream locations – including three background location upstream and ten downstream locations. Sulfur concentrations downstream were equivalent to background and no other analytes were detected at concentrations greater than the laboratory reporting limits.
- Ambient and personal air monitoring in the work zones continued.

- Construction on the causeway continued
- Work continues on assessing downstream effects of asphalt to establish cleanup objectives and action plans. Focus is being given to mitigation efforts that will allow headgates and irrigation ditches to be safely reopened.



Causeway and construction equipment.