

Stillwater Train Derailment Press Release

Reed Point, Montana (June 27, 2023) –10:00 a.m.

Unified Command announced today that crews were able to access and remove the first impacted car from the river. That car contained asphalt and has been safely transferred to a staging area. Work is underway this morning to begin disassembling the west segment of the bridge. This will allow better access for crews to assess and remove the remaining cars. Riprap is being brought on site this morning to construct a causeway, or a stable path, to assist car assessment and removal.

Unified Command observed an ongoing release of asphalt material in the Yellowstone River and is determining next steps to mitigate and address the release. This solid waste is not water soluble and is not anticipated to impact water quality. Assessment will take place today to evaluate the presence of asphalt material on streambanks, the water surface, the riverbed, and within the water column. This assessment will be done by boat between the derailment site downstream and Pompey's Pillar.

Montana Rail Link has set up an email for members of the public to report any sighting or impacts that they observe pertaining to the release of asphalt or molten sulfur in the river. The email address for members of the public to submit information is: rpderailment@mtrail.com. Additional hazmat response resources have also been deployed this morning to assist in assessment and remediation efforts.

Water quality testing is being done daily at 10 downstream locations and at one upstream reference location. Results thus far show no detectable levels of petroleum hydrocarbons and downstream sulfur levels that are consistent with the upstream sampling location. At this time, there are no known risks to public drinking water or private drinking water wells.

A temporary and localized sheen was observed on the western bank of the river immediately downstream from the remaining cars. 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 plans on sending an additional press release out this afternoon. A public meeting regarding the derailment and response efforts will be held on Wednesday, June 28, at 7:00 p.m. at the Columbus High School Gym, 433 N 3rd St, Columbus, MT 59019. Please park in the west parking lot and enter through the gym doors to access the public meeting.

Site Background

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. A total of 17 cars derailed, with 10 cars entering 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. The 10 cars that impacted the river contain asphalt liquified petroleum, molten sulfur, and scrap metal.



Image of crews assessing submerged rail cars.

For more information, please visit the response websites at:

<https://response.epa.gov/stillwatertrainderailment> or <https://www.stillwatercountymt.gov/train-derailment/>

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This response is operating under a Unified Command which enables different jurisdictions and organizations to jointly manage and direct incident activities. Unified Command for this incident is comprised of representatives from Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Montana Rail Link.

