

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH
Atlanta, Georgia

March 25, 2023

Dear Director Wallensky:

I submit this FOIA request out of concern for the safety of your employees, other government employees, contractors, and the people living and visiting East Palestine, Ohio. I understand that the ATSDR formed and deployed an Acute Chemical Exposure (ACE) team for a public health assessment following the Norfolk Southern chemical spill and chemical fires. It is my belief that on the afternoon of March 6 seven ATSDR team members became ill in East Palestine with chemical exposure symptoms similar to those reported by the public. It is my understanding that the ACE team members were recalled from the field out of concern for their safety. This FOIA request is filed based on my educational interest associated with the ATSDR's experiences, findings, and activities.

I am seeking ...

1. ... *East Palestine Incident Reports, memos, and other documents created by ATSDR on or around March 6, with content that describes, but are not limited to, activities, observations, symptoms, and illnesses of the ACE team members. These document(s) may have been created by or handled by Captain Jill Shugart, her supervisor, their supervisors, and/or the ACE team members.*
2. ...*documents that (a) describe the team's physical locations during their time in East Palestine before and during the onset of their illnesses, (b) documents that prove the ATSDR conducted a formal post-exposure medical evaluation for these employees (names, personal info redacted).*
3. ...*documents that describe exposure symptoms reported, to include, but are not limited to, nausea, headaches, etc.*
4. ...*documents and correspondence pertaining to Captain Shugart or other ATSDR employees notifying Incident Commander USEPA, which may include, but is not limited to, Region 5 On Scene Coordinator Ralph Dollhopf and persons similar.*
5. ...*documents showing that ATSDR notified OSHA and NIOSH about these potential injuries and asked these agencies technical assistance and advice about PPE needed for the next East Palestine deployment.*
6. ...*documents that describe why and when the ATSDR would be halting their investigation due to their employee safety concerns on and around March 6.*
7. ...*a copy of the site safety plan ATSDR prepared for the field investigation, and the explanation of personal protective equipment (PPE) donned by ATSDR employees onsite.*
8. ...*documents denoting the occupations of the ACE team members in East Palestine March 6, which could be but are not limited to physicians, nurses, health specialists, epidemiologists, etc.*
9. ...*documents describing when ATSDR halted the onsite ACE team work on or around March 7.*
10. ...*communications between ACE team members, other ATSDR employees, other government agencies, and contractors about this issue.*
11. ...*communications between the ATSDR and USEPA pertaining to the potential improper use of acute exposure levels instead of the proper longer term intermediate exposure levels for the general public.*
12. ...*documents containing information about photoionization detectors or PIDs inside homes by ATSDR employees, USEPA employees, or their contractors.*
13. ...*communications to and from ATSDR pertaining to the USEPA TAGA bus being unable to detect chemicals of concern (vinyl chloride, butyl acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate, and other contaminants) for a time it was used and the detection levels being too high. My assumption is that records created by Captain Shugart and/or other ATSDR officials may pertain to USEPA on this topic.*

This information is in the public's interest, notwithstanding the people of East Palestine who rely on government employees to disclose their findings to them in an expeditious manner, as well as visitors, and other government workers who may have or continue to be at risk. I am submitting this FOIA request as an educational representative. Based on my March 23-25 visit to East Palestine, unmitigated acute public and occupational health risks remain. Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely, Andrew Whelton, Ph.D.

Events of Public Health and Worker Safety Interest I am Aware of as of March 26, 2023

1. On February 15, a reporter for FOX19 Cincinnati, Ohio reported becoming ill while near the site on a resident's private property.
2. During my February 25-27 visit to East Palestine, I became ill (i.e., headache) starting on February 27, and this continued for two days. I did not wear respiratory protection onsite because both the U.S. EPA and the State of Ohio repeatedly claimed the air was safe as I have previously stated.
3. On March 1, the American Rail System Federation of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters reported that railroad workers become ill while in East Palestine.
4. On March 10, Pennsylvania Senator Doug Mastriano disclosed at a Pennsylvania Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee hearing that he and his chief of staff became ill (i.e., headache, burning respiratory system, rashes) after visiting East Palestine for 5-6 hours in February.
5. During my visit to East Palestine March 17-19, I was informed that faculty in East Palestine High School became ill after returning to work, and that the schools have yet to be professionally decontaminated by U.S. EPA approved hazardous material contractors.
6. During my visit to East Palestine March 23-25, I was informed that some East Palestine Elementary School faculty became ill after returning to work.
7. I was also informed that two workers in the East Palestine Municipal Building became ill with chemical exposure systems several weeks ago and this was attributed to the heavily contaminated Sulfur Run creek which flows directly underneath this building.
8. Since February, several journalists have told me they became ill while in and immediately after leaving the area.
9. Many residents have told me they became ill after returning to the area and continue to report chemical exposure symptoms.