

Senator Sherrod Brown, J.D. Vance  
Congressman Bill Johnson  
(sent by email)  
Hart Senate Office Building, 201 2nd St NE, Washington, D.C. 20002

June 17, 2023

Dear Senators and Congressman representing Ohio:

I am a professor at Purdue University evaluating health risks of conditions that impact people and businesses in and around East Palestine, Ohio. I want to share important findings with you. After my June 10-12 investigation in East Palestine, I have serious concerns for the safety of children, adults, and businesses. During this, my sixth field investigation, I discovered, again, that *acute chemical exposures* are occurring inside some residential and commercial buildings near the derailment site and along the contaminated Sulfur Run. **I provide four recommendations below.**

**There are still acute health threats inside buildings that agencies have yet to eliminate.** Several buildings around the derailment site and along Sulfur Run still have the characteristic odor of chemical contamination. I have smelled it firsthand and we have been doing nearby environmental testing. Last week some occupants indicated that they became ill and have been avoiding certain buildings even after airing them out repeatedly. Some occupants have paid for indoor air testing which revealed butyl acrylate exceeding the ATSDR screening level, soot was present, and other chemicals present (e.g., ethylhexyl acrylate, benzene). Other occupants do not have financial ability to pay for indoor air testing, but I can confirm the odor was present. Norfolk Southern contractors did visit some buildings in February using inadequate air testing devices<sup>1</sup>, and in one case, their team left the building because of the unpleasant odor they encountered. Some occupants told me that Norfolk Southern said they will not help them because there is legal action against them. Some building occupants have told me they cannot spend more than 2 to 5 minutes inside their building without experiencing side effects. In February/March, the East Palestine Municipal Building (85 N. Market Street), where town council meets, was contaminated with chemicals from Sulfur Run. Agencies found chemicals entering through unplugged drain pipes beneath the building. This was corrected, but contamination in other residential and commercial buildings remains.

Actions needed are to:

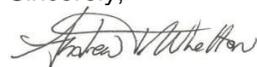
1. Decontaminate all residential, commercial, and government buildings surrounding the derailment site and along Sulfur Run. This will help maintain anonymity.
2. Conduct chemical testing inside these buildings for soot and over several weeks for volatile organic compounds (VOC) and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOC).
3. Inspect and eliminate pathways where chemicals enter buildings from the Sulfur Run culverts that go underneath and alongside buildings (i.e., building pipes, drains, cracked concrete, sumps, etc.).

**Evidence shows that this disaster has repeatedly exceeded the scientific and organizational capability of the USEPA and other agencies involved.** You may consider recommending:

- The assembly and charging of an independent team of public experts to advise decision makers about scientific issues with this disaster. Areas of expertise needed are air quality, water quality, materials, civil engineering, environmental engineering, mechanical engineering, public health, environmental health, epidemiology, groundwater, risk assessment, among others.

Please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at [awhelton@purdue.edu](mailto:awhelton@purdue.edu).

Sincerely,



Andrew Whelton

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<sup>1</sup> Borst and Bogardus. *E&E News*. June 1, 2023. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/epa-promised-clarity-transparency-after-ohio-train-derailment-but-some-air-monitors-didnt-work/>