

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF**

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**BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS**

Hearing: Protecting Public Health and Environment in the Wake of the Norfolk Southern Train  
Derailment and Chemical Release and East Palestine

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Washington, D.C.

Good morning, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to share the state of Ohio's work to restore East Palestine, a community that I have called home for the past month.

My name is Anne Vogel, Director of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. On behalf of Governor DeWine, Lieutenant Governor Husted, and the tremendous Team that I am privileged to represent at the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, I thank you for allowing me to share with you our ongoing efforts to protect human health and the environment in East Palestine.

Governor DeWine has been to the village regularly to reassure the community that - while this is Norfolk Southern's train, their wreck, and their mess - the entire apparatus of state government has been mobilized to assist as East Palestine begins to recover from this traumatic experience. Cabinet officials from Health, Mental Health, Development, Agriculture, Natural Resources, National Guard, Public Safety, Highway Patrol, State Fire Marshal, and Emergency Management have spent time in East Palestine, assessing short- and long-term needs, answering questions, and standing up support operations such as the free health clinic in town.

Ohio EPA has a dedicated team of experts - the Emergency Response team - with a combined 150 years of experience in environmental emergency management - that responded to the derailment within one hour of being notified by the railroad. By 12:25am on February 4, Ohio EPA was on the scene and immediately began the work of containing the release of chemicals into the nearby Sulphur Run.

We have worked around the clock since that day to oversee the work of Norfolk Southern's contractors to remove the gross contamination from the creeks in the immediate derailment area. Contaminated liquids and soil are being carefully removed from the site daily.

Ohio EPA's oversight also includes ensuring the safety of residents served by the municipal water system in East Palestine. In the days immediately after the derailment, and now continuing weekly, the municipal wells are tested for a wide array of volatile organic chemicals and semi-volatile organic chemicals and all lab reports have indicated that the public water system is safe – there are no signs of contamination.

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the Ohio EPA's response to the derailment. However, what I want to make sure that each of you AND the Village of East Palestine hears today is that the commitment to “stay in East Palestine” as long as it takes – are not empty words from bureaucrats and politicians.

The work of the Ohio EPA to restore the safe environment of East Palestine is just beginning.

- The emergency phase will continue as long as obvious, known contamination remains – for example we will have a large presence ensuring that contaminated soil under the tracks is removed.
- The investigation phase is also well under way: our oversight of Norfolk Southern's work plans – for soil testing, for track removal and replacement, for water sampling – will make sure that Norfolk Southern is taking all the right steps to remediate and protect East Palestine from potential long-term hazards.
- We have installed monitoring wells at the site of the derailment to test for potential contamination to ground water – now and in the future.
- We have installed sentinel wells for long-term sampling of ground water – this is an early detection system that will tell us if contamination is approaching the municipal wellfield.
- We will test the municipal water system on a weekly basis – using our own labs.
- We will continue to be 100 percent transparent, sharing full lab results immediately.
- We will attend open houses, town halls and be present in the community answering important questions and rebutting misinformation with facts.

The data that we collect from each sample, each test, each observation informs the next step we take along the path to long-term, full remediation.

You and your constituents probably have many of the same questions that I hear from residents every day. How long will we test the water? How long until the fish come back? Can I play in the yard and eat out of my garden? How or when will we know if the damage to our village is worse than we thought, or even irreparable?

These are legitimate questions, and we are committed to working with residents to find answers. But I am personally invested in helping this community heal, and I can promise that Governor DeWine, his administration, and the whole team at Ohio EPA will not stop until the science definitively shows that the residents of East Palestine are safe in their beautiful community.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.