



Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

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ATSDR Stories from the Field



The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR), along with other federal agencies and state and local health departments, collaborated to support the public health response for the February 2023 train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.

On February 3, 2023, a freight train carrying hazardous materials derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, affecting communities in Ohio and Pennsylvania. More than 60 staff across CDC/ATSDR, including staff from ATSDR Regions 3 and 5, and EIS officers were deployed virtually and to the field to support the seven months plus long response, collaborating with state and local health departments in Ohio and Pennsylvania. At the request of state and local health authorities, CDC/ATSDR staff conducted an Assessment of Chemical Exposures (ACE) investigation — a rapid epidemiological evaluation of the impact of a chemical release on individuals and the community. In addition, CDC/ATSDR staff supported critical health communication and environmental data reviews and led partnership coordination with local, state, and federal partners.



In February 2023, a train carrying hazardous chemicals derailed in East Palestine, Ohio.

Photo Credit: ACE team member Beatrice Gichuhi

While working onsite, ATSDR began surveying in February 2023 with more than 700 community members and 300 first responders who had potentially been exposed to substances from the derailment, to ask about their health symptoms and if they sought any type of medical care. The information helped state and local public health partners make better decisions to protect public health. The ACE results supported the decision to set up a permanent health clinic in Ohio for residents who were affected by the derailment.

ATSDR's Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program (GRASP) supported the public health response activities. GRASP staff, in collaboration with the community, identified areas to target for door-to-door surveys. In addition, GRASP supported ACE surveys during data collection in the field by managing tables, creating PDF maps for offline location tracking, and

integrating real time tracking using CDC/ATSDR’s OneMap interactive mapping platform.

As part of the agency’s commitment to engage with communities to address residents’ needs, CDC/ATSDR staff presented and participated in approximately eight community meetings and town halls. At these events, residents and responders from Ohio and Pennsylvania were able to share their concerns about potential health effects and receive information from public health authorities. While the response ended in 2023, CDC and ATSDR staff have continued to support public health activities for East Palestine communities and individuals affected by the train derailment and will continue to do so as long as needed.



CDC/ATSDR employees Allison Stargel, Environmental Health Scientist (ATSDR/Emergency Management Unit) and Lisa Goldsworthy, Public Health Preparedness Fellow (Office of Readiness and Response/Division of State and Local Readiness) prepare to answer questions at a town hall meeting in East Palestine.
Photo credit: ACE team member Emily Faherty,



CDC/ATSDR team led by ATSDR’s Emergency Management Unit and Regional Offices 3 and 5 collaborated with federal, state, and local partners to support the East Palestine train derailment public health response.
Photo credit: ACE team member Valerie Madera-Garcia

More Information

- [East Palestine Train Derailment](#)