

Message

From: Grantham, Nancy [Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]
Sent: 2/23/2023 9:55:20 PM
To: OPA Non-Career [OPA_Non-Career@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: East Palestine Train Derailment Social Listening Report - February 23, 2023, 1650 ET
Attachments: East Palestine Train Derailment Social Listening Report 2023_02_23 1650 ET.pdf

Did you all get this? thanks ng

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From: FEMA-ESF15-Coordination <FEMA-ESF15-Coordination@fema.dhs.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2023 4:51 PM
Subject: East Palestine Train Derailment Social Listening Report - February 23, 2023, 1650 ET

EAST PALESTINE TRAIN DERAILMENT

SOCIAL LISTENING REPORT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2023, 1650 ET
ESF 15 - EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

This report is for official use only. Intended recipients are emergency management officials requiring information about the immediate impact and needs associated with the event.

Some insights within this report may reference unverified social media accounts belonging to individuals. Links to these accounts are not included in this report in order to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Some media broadcast stories may not be publicly available.

SUMMARY

- Online conversation surrounding the federal response concerning the East Palestine train derailment has slightly decreased and remains mostly political.
- Health related issues remain a major concern for residents with many believing the government and health care providers are not prioritizing the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Many residents and scientists remain mistrustful of the air and drinking water in East Palestine.
- The CNN town hall yesterday evening left attendees with mixed feelings about the response. Many residents remain wary toward Norfolk Southern and believe the CEO did not address all their concerns. There was mostly positive reaction to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s stance toward Norfolk Southern, although some residents wondered how EPA will enforce orders for Norfolk Southern to pay for the clean-up.
- Residents remain unsatisfied with Norfolk Southern's response and do not find them trustworthy following reports that the company disregarded safety warnings as early as October 2022.
- Traditional media coverage highly focused heavily on National Transportation Safety Board's preliminary report findings on the train derailment. Other widely discussed subjects included criticism over the timing of the Department of Transportation (DOT) secretary's visit to East Palestine broad. Overall media sentiment is negative and carries political undertones, compounded by public uncertainty about recovery timelines.
- FEMA coverage remains limited and includes the White House reiterating to reporters that FEMA and interagency partners have been in coordinated response since early February.
- This morning's newspaper front-page headlines focus on Ohio state lawmakers wanting to play a more critical response role, Norfolk Southern's CEO reflecting upon his company's mistakes and former President Trump saying the federal government betrayed East Palestine via an inadequate response.

FEDERAL RESPONSE

FEMA

- Former President's Trump's visit to East Palestine and criticism of FEMA's response posture continues to drive traditional and social media discussion since February 22. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))

- One [U.S. congressman from Pennsylvania](#) and member of the House Financial Services and Small Business Committee contended that the Biden administration's response has been "indecisive" and "too little, too late."
- Public reaction to the congressman's interview is limited but suggests the current Congress may not approve additional rail safety regulation.
- During today's White House press briefing, reporters' questions revolved around the timing of the president's visit to Ukraine, whether the president has spoken with East Palestine's mayor, when the president will visit East Palestine and details behind the federal government's long-term commitment to impacted survivors. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))
- The White House press secretary reassured reporters that the federal response has been ongoing since right after the train derailment. However, social media users [criticized the remarks](#), suggesting the White House should not be satisfied with the response so far.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- Following the CNN Town Hall in East Palestine on February 22, much of the recent online discussion surrounding the EPA focused on the EPA administrator's statement to the CEO of Norfolk Southern ordering the company to pay for all cleanup efforts. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- Most responses to the statement were political but supportive of the EPA's assertive posture toward Norfolk Southern. A smaller number questioned if or how the EPA would enforce their demands.
- One journalist [criticized a misleading statement](#) from a New York Times article stating that "no major official" had visited East Palestine before former president Trump and provided evidence that the EPA administrator had been to the disaster site days prior to the former president's arrival.

Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)

- Online mentions of HHS in the context of East Palestine remain at a low volume, with most people mentioning HHS as they name government agencies who are responding to the train derailment.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

- National and local news reports on the DOT secretary's visit to East Palestine today have focused heavily on the NTSB preliminary report on the derailment and reiterated public criticism of the secretary's delay in visiting impacted sites. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))
- Associated Press original story has been reposted more than 150 times today.
- Public sentiment around the DOT secretary's visit to East Palestine has largely been political, with the most people expressing disapproval at the timing of the visit. Others are expressing gratitude for him bringing attention to the need to update safety regulations. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- One U.S. senator from Texas issued a press statement criticizing the DOT secretary's policy proposals, insisting Norfolk Southern and [NTSB representatives testify](#) before the Senate Commerce Committee soon.
- Following NTSB's preliminary report, reporters have emphasized that Norfolk Southern's crew tried to stop the train before derailment and notified Cleveland East dispatch of possible derailment, but the train's hot-box detectors may have been delayed in signaling an excessive warm wheel bearings. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))

- NTSB officials explained they will hold an investigative field hearing with witnesses in East Palestine regarding the derailment, and the accident was “100% preventable,” during a live press conference. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- Shares of news coverage of the NTSB report are largely driving online mentions of the report. Online discussion has included people asking questions around elements of the train derailment, some expressing skepticism of the findings and others expressing their belief that the report means no blame is warranted towards the previous administration. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Conversation is low regarding the CDC, with a few people still spreading conspiracy theories related to the agency updating website information related to the toxicity of vinyl chloride prior to the train derailment.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION/SENTIMENT

- Local residents remain wary of reports that water and air tests show there is no current health risk. Residents are frustrated and feel their concerns and reports of health issues are being swept aside by responding officials. This is fueling an overall feeling of distrust toward state and federal officials. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))
- Social media users have responded negatively to the [Ohio lieutenant governor](#) suggesting that East Palestine residents should buy bottled water if they feel consuming tap water is still unsafe. These users countered that many impacted individuals cannot afford bottled water.
- Some residents have begun posting filtration products that residents can use, with others adding that it is uncertain if these products will work. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- One toxicologist said public officials and community residents are enduring an “[uncontrolled experiment](#),” noting uncertainties about where the flow of chemicals in waterways and air will go, during a nationally-televised newscast.
- Impacted residents and the broader public remain [frustrated by Norfolk Southern’s response](#) to the disaster and skeptical of the company’s trustworthiness, referencing reports that found the company previously ignored safety warnings as recently as October 2022.
- Some also believe the company’s “[enhanced remediation plan](#)” for the derailment area was only developed after the EPA demanded more action and threatened significant fines.
- Impacted residents and the broader public remain [frustrated by Norfolk Southern’s response](#) East Palestine residents left CNN’s town hall last night with conflicted feeling to the disaster and skeptical of the company’s trustworthiness, referencing reports that found the company previously ignored safety warnings as recently as October 2022.s regarding the disaster response after speaking with officials. Public response to the town hall was highly political. Some residents expressed frustration that all the questions asked last night were not answered. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))
- In addition to residents’ distrust of Norfolk Southern, one individual stated he felt like East Palestine residents were being “treated like dummies” by the company. Many online commenters agreed and felt the CEO was not directly addressing residents’ concerns. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#))

RUMORS/MISINFORMATION

- There has been an increase in both conspiracy-related and misinformation posts following a plane crash on February 22 that involved employees of the CTEH in Arkansas, with people sharing that the officials were headed to or involved with East Palestine. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- One national news outlet reported on multiple rumors spreading false flag conspiracies, such as the derailment being an [intentional attack](#) by Norfolk Southern or the federal government. Some social media users highlighted that the disaster event resembles plots from movies and literature from 1985 and 2022.

LIFELINES

Health and Medical

- East Palestine residents continue to voice [concern about their health](#) in public community groups citing recurring cough, headaches, and sore throats. This is garnering national media attention ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#)).
- A few residents stated they noticed a [difference in air quality](#) when they began using air purifiers.
- One resident encouraged others to [document their symptoms](#) every day for legal purposes in an online group focused on litigation options for residents.
- A national media outlet reported some scientists are skeptical of the drinking water in East Palestine due to sampling errors. Large air bubbles in containers and samples not being acidified to federal EPA requirements are the same issues that were found in preliminary reports. An aquatic ecologist said if he was an East Palestine resident, he would be mistrustful of the water. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- Some were also skeptical of a post detailing safety information for East Palestine's groundwater supply. The journalist who reported the water sampling errors also noted the information provided on the Ohio EPA's webpage only contains data from industry-funded testing. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- A science center based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, will be [hosting a virtual event](#) today at 1900 ET to address the health and environmental concerns of residents throughout Ohio and Pennsylvania. The event will include a panel of three faculty members from a local university. The online event is free to attend.

Hazardous Waste

- Toxic wastewater used to extinguish the fire from the recent train derailment is headed to a Houston, Texas suburb for disposal, according to a local news channel. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has sought to reassure Harris County residents that Texas Molecular is authorized and prepared to remove hazardous contents from the biosphere and prevent public harm. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))

NEWSPAPER FRONT-PAGE HEADLINES

