

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

February 16, 2023

The Honorable Michael S. Regan  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Regan,

I write to you with great concern over the horrific train derailment and subsequent disaster unfolding in Ohio. This is a terrible tragedy for that community and presents potential far-reaching safety hazards to those living and working downstream of the event. Many in my State of Missouri are now asking whether it is safe to drink their water or consume products made in the region. As the Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), you have an obligation to provide clear guidance to the people of Missouri, and everyone living in affected regions, about the health and safety risks stemming from this disaster.

On February 3, 2023, a freight train carrying vinyl chloride derailed and exploded in East Palestine, Ohio. Since then, emergency crews have conducted a “controlled” burn, which has resulted in hydrogen chloride and phosgene being released into the atmosphere. These are highly toxic chemicals; phosgene was used as a weapon during World War I.

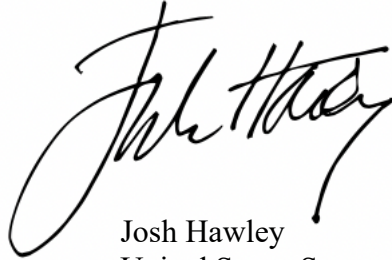
Many in the immediate vicinity have already evacuated, but the release of these toxic chemicals will have far-reaching effects for those who live, work, and drink downstream. There have also been anecdotal reports of pets and livestock dying in the area surrounding the derailment.

Meanwhile, the EPA has failed to provide clear guidance to the people of my State and others who may be exposed to these toxins. It is imperative that the EPA is transparent with the American people about the risks this disaster may pose to the health, safety, and well-being of those in affected areas. It has been nearly two weeks since the train derailed and assurances from your agency are still at a minimum. I ask that you immediately provide the public with an update about what the EPA knows about current risks and in particular provide the following information:

1. Is there a threat to groundwater safety in any areas in Missouri, especially near the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers?
2. Is there a threat to the health and public safety of Missouri residents who may consume foods or other products produced downstream of the derailment?
3. Is the EPA monitoring the air and drinking water in Missouri, and if so, what are the results of these studies?

4. How will this spill impact the lower Mississippi River in Missouri from Birds Point to the Arkansas state line? In particular, does the contamination present a risk to the men and women working in that area?
5. Please provide a complete list of the chemicals that those in Missouri may be exposed to as a result of this disaster, and their associated risks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator