



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Addressing Air Quality Concerns in East Palestine, Ohio and Beaver County

Pittsburgh, Pa. – The Breathe Project is aware of [reports](#) that the U.S. EPA has either tested and is in the process of screening 500+ homes for vinyl chloride and hydrochloric acid. **Residual dioxins, benzene, and other chemicals** from combustion from the array of chemicals in the burning rail cars, however, could have attached to fabrics, clothing, or settle on surfaces. (When organic and hydrocarbon chemicals burn, they can potentially form dioxin and benzene, endocrine disruptors and hazardous to people at low levels of exposure ([Toxic Free Future, 2023](#).)

According to the U.S. EPA, “[Dioxins](#) are highly toxic and can cause cancer, reproductive and developmental problems, damage to the immune system and can interfere with hormones.” Also, “Acute (short-term) inhalation exposure of humans to [benzene](#) may cause drowsiness, dizziness, headaches, as well as eye, skin and respiratory tract irritation and, at high levels, unconsciousness.”

The Breathe Project recommends that public health officials enroll people who were in close proximity to the incident at any time during its duration and especially during the intentional burning of the at-risk-of-exploding rail cars – including workers, residents and others – in a [health monitoring program](#) to gather baseline information and track any potential for lingering exposure levels. If people have experienced sick or dying animals, those people need to have their animals tested to learn more about their exposure to this incident.

There should be widespread testing of people and the area for these things so residents can feel comfortable going home.

The National Response Center should be mobilizing government agencies and creating a federal response plan. If this is already happening it needs to be made more visible so people understand what is going on.

We are witnessing an evolutionary approach and, as a result, there are gaps in what is being monitored, measured and communicated. What needs to happen is a more integrated and well-communicated response that tells people where they can go for key facts, information and assistance that is not dependent upon Norfolk Southern, the cause of the incident in the first place and an entity that has direct interests in influencing an outcome that minimizes their liabilities.

Please keep in mind that this is an environment where up-to-date information is changing rapidly. We are sharing information via Twitter @BreatheProject as we become aware of it. We may not be aware of everything being done at this time.

*The Breathe Project is a coalition of citizens, environmental advocates, public health professionals and academics using the best available science and technology to improve air quality, eliminate climate pollution and make our region a healthy, prosperous place to live. The Breathe Collaborative powers the Breathe Project, its community outreach platform.*