

FAQ: I Live in East Palestine. Is it Safe to go Home?

Q: Can my family and I go home?

A: Yes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and Ohio Department of Health have stated that it is safe for residents of East Palestine to return to their homes, based on air quality samples taken from 291 area homes where there was no detection of vinyl chloride and hydrogen chloride. The U.S. EPA continues to conduct community air monitoring throughout the East Palestine area 24 hours a day and has not detected any levels of concern.

Q: How do I make sure my home gets tested?

A: To request air monitoring or private water system testing at your home, call the Residential Re-Entry Request Hotline: (330) 849-3919. Please note that having a private water system means that you do NOT get your water from the East Palestine public water system.

Q: Is there a medical test available that can measure my exposure?

A: There are ways to measure exposure to vinyl chloride in urine, but the test must be done within a day of short-term exposure and can be difficult to obtain through most healthcare providers. If you are experiencing symptoms or have concerns, please contact your healthcare provider or the poison control center at 800-222-1222.

Q: What symptoms might I experience from chemical exposure?

A: Breathing certain chemicals can make you dizzy, nauseous, or sleepy, and/or may cause a headache. In addition, some chemicals can also be slightly irritating to the eyes and respiratory tract causing a cough or shortness of breath. You may have breathed in chemicals and smoke during the fire and/or you may be sensitive to the smell of low-level air contaminants that remain. If you have symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider or go to the emergency department.

Q: Is the smell in the area normal?

A: Yes. Residents may still smell odors from the site of the derailment. Even though you may smell the chemicals in the air, it does not mean they exist at unsafe levels. Air quality levels are still being monitored by the U.S. EPA 24 hours a day which has not detected any levels of concern. People who are sensitive to smells may experience headaches or nausea.

Q: Have there been impacts to my drinking water?

A: If you have concerns about your water, you can use bottled water, however, sampling of East Palestine's municipal water system found no evidence of contamination associated with the derailment. If you receive water from a private well and are concerned about water quality, you are encouraged to use bottled water until your water has been tested. To request free, private well testing, call 330-849-3919.

Q: How does this impact my pets and livestock?

A: Most symptoms in pets will appear within hours to days of exposure. Pets with inhalation exposure may experience respiratory irritation and symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing. Pets should not be drinking from or swimming in streams or bodies of water. Check with your local health department on impacted bodies of water. If your pet is experiencing symptoms listed or other symptoms and you are concerned about, we recommend your pet be seen by a veterinarian. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control number at (888) 436-4435 may be used as an additional resource about exposure concerns.

If you have a sick animal, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. If you see a sick animal, contact animal control for your jurisdiction.