February 28, 2023

Mayor Conaway: Welcome everybody. We're glad to have you here for the opening of the EPA storefront. It's a nice day here in Northern Ohio, thank you all for coming, and with that I would like to introduce you to EPA Director Michael Regan.

Administrator Michael Regan: Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Mayor Conaway, for being here today and for welcoming me back to East Palestine. I want you to know how much your partnership means to EPA, especially as we work to earn the trust of the community. I also want to thank President Biden who's made every resource available to help this community get back on its feet after the train derailment. That's why you see representatives from across the federal family, FEMA, HHS, FRA and others, who in addition to supporting cleanup activities, are leading public engagement efforts to ensure the community is kept informed every single step of the way. That's what my visit here today is all about. This is my third time in East Palestine, and as I've said before, I recognize there has been a deficit of trust. This community has gone through a lot over the last several weeks, and understandably continue to wonder what the future looks like for East Palestine. I've had the privilege of meeting with enough residents, students, business owners, and local leaders here, to know that the future of this community is bright, because the people love this town, I mean really love this town, and there's a lot to be proud of in this town. I can promise that as this community continues to look forward, we're going to be here every step of the way, for as long as it takes. We aren't going anywhere, and you can tell by this storefront behind me, that we are here for the long haul. We want to make sure that the community knows we are here for them and that we're bringing resources to bear for them. I’m excited to share that EPA’s Community Welcome Center is now officially open for business. From 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, residents and business owners can stop in to get their questions answered, sign up for in-home air monitoring, and learn more about cleaning services. So, we're encouraging members of the community who have questions, to please visit us here at 25 North Market Street. The people of East Palestine will not have to figure out what comes next for them on their own. We are in this together as I've said from day one, and at the same time, I want you all to know that we are holding Norfolk Southern accountable for putting this community in harm's way. When I was here last week, I announced an EPA order that requires the company to conduct all cleanup actions associated with the East Palestine train derailment. Norfolk Southern has since agreed to comply with EPA's order. I want to remind folks that at any point the company fails to comply with the actions ordered by EPA, we will immediately step in, conduct the work that needs to be done, and then force Norfolk Southern to pay triple the cost in accordance with the powers granted to my agency. In no way, shape, form, or fashion, will Norfolk Southern get off the hook for the mess that they've created. And as the cleanup work continues at a rapid pace, EPA is awaiting Norfolk Sothern’s work plan, which we will review and approve. The workplan will outline every single necessary step of the environmental damage caused by the derailment. No detail will be overlooked. This work will be done that leaves this community whole again, and the work plan will be finalized in the coming days, and we will share more about the details of that workplan. So, for now, we will continue to workday by day to earn the trust of this community, and reassure this community that when the cameras leave, we will still be here, however long it takes. Thank you all.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Yes, I appreciate that question, and let me say that the agency will continue to follow the science and conduct the necessary testing to keep the community safe. But I want to be clear also, I have heard the students, I've heard the local business owners, we have had conversations about dioxins and what they perceive to be potential impacts. I'm taking that information back to my team, back to Washington, D.C., and I want folks to know that we've heard them loud and clear on that topic.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know the decisions for that were made by state and local authorities, and when the actions were taken, we were there to monitor the air quality impacts, and provided them the information needed to determine what impacts happened in terms of air quality, and so those decisions were made at the local level. Mr. Mayor, I don't know if you want to say anything about that?

Mayor Conaway: It was a joint effort between local and state authorities. We worked together with the Ohio National Guard for modeling exactly what would happen if we didn't do anything with the cars, and it was determined that was the best course of action.

(Inaudible question)

Mayor Conaway: I definitely think we’re on a good path, there’s definitely lots of questions that still remain to be answered. As far as people from the other states, they knew the facilities were in their states and I understand their concerns, but at the time it’s governed by the federal EPA, so therefore it should be safe for all the citizens there.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know I understand all of the concerns that have been raised, and on that particular issue, let me say that the state, federal, and local partnership is strong. Obviously, the state has primacy through the Department of Agriculture and the Wildlife Commission to determine impact to wildlife and agriculture. But we’re doing all of the proper analyses that we can do, along with the state to determine those safety measures, and I look to the governor and the state of Ohio to lead the response on that effort.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know we have done the testing and put in place the testing that is protective of the community. As I said before, I understand the questions surrounding dioxins. I listened to students, state, local leaders, I mean local business owners, and we’re taking that information back. I want folks to understand that we hear them loud and clear and understand those concerns.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Let me be clear, EPA is testing for all toxic chemicals. We have a complete inventory of everything that was on that train, and everything we’re monitoring for and testing for. We understand the levels of potential adverse health impacts from those toxins or any byproducts, there are no gaps in the testing. If there are concerns or folks have questions, like the legitimate concerns and questions that were posed by the local business owners and students in terms of dioxins, well that’s why we’re having these conversations, and we’re going to work to alleviate those concerns.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Every chemical that was on that train and every byproduct from those chemicals have been tested or are part of our testing regimen. So, we believe firmly, that our testing regimen is protected. We believe that the technology is sound. And if there are gaps, and lots of people have lots of opinions, if there are gaps, we want to address those gaps. Which is why I’ve been to this community three times now, and which is why I met with teachers, students and local business owners. What we want to do is close the information gap and be sure that we are addressing the community’s needs, and that’s what we’re going to focus on.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know, what I would say is, as a federal family, all of our agencies are working on community engagement strategies. And as we’ve taken information from local leaders, we’ve been encouraged, in addition to the federal government knocking on doors, which may or may not be welcomed, that we’re working with volunteers and community organizations to get this information out. One of the reasons we’ve opened this storefront is so that people can feel comfortable coming in and getting this information, and we’re continuing to work with the community to develop strategies on how best to engage the community and get them that necessary information.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Absolutely, communities have a right to know, which is why there was a brief pause when the EPA took over the cleanup so that we could work to access directly from the company where they had contracts in place and which communities the waste and the soil were being shipped to. I want to say that there are facilities that exist within Ohio and all the country that are heavily regulated and permitted to take this kind of waste. What we’re doing is working on an alert system so that Norfolk Southern can be held accountable, and as this material is moving, the appropriate authorities have the appropriate information so that the communities are not alarmed and that communities know that their safety has been taken very, very seriously.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Yes, you know obviously we've been testing the air from the very beginning, and the state has been testing the water. You know there have been many residents here who have indicated that they worry about some residual, or some dust, or some particles. While we don't believe that there are any adverse health impacts in homes or businesses as it relates to the derailment, this is an additional step we're taking to alleviate concern and lower the angst. And so, what we're providing is an in-home or in-business thorough cleaning service, as well as an external cleaning service for homes and businesses, just to help the community understand that in addition to the air quality monitoring and all of the protective measures we're taking, we want to go that extra mile so that people feel comfortable living in their communities.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Absolutely, there will be representation from all of the federal agencies, FEMA, you know FRA, the HHS or CDC and EPA, and so in addition to coming in and signing up for those cleaning services, residents will also be able to come in and request indoor air quality monitoring for their homes, and they'll also be able to retrieve information about what the full federal family is doing here on site, as well as give us information about what some of the latest concerns are.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: I'm sorry, I can't hear the question. Yes, we have taken a look at that article and what I would say is you know we understand based on the testing that we've done, the concern about both short-term and long-term impacts. So, we didn't learn anything new from that article and the veterinarian that spoke to health impacts, but what I can say is that we are working as fast as possible to conduct this cleanup and ensure that we protect the community while this cleanup occurs. If there is anyone that is experiencing any kind of adverse health impacts immediately, we ask that they consult medical professionals, the county public health official, because we want to connect all of these dots. But I want to be clear that our testing, air quality testing in the states, or water quality testing, has not yielded any adverse health impacts that we have seen at this moment. And so, we're going to be laser focused on the cleanup and continuing to protect the public from any kind of harms and dangers as a result of this train derailment.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: Yes. You know all of that is on our radar, and so our air quality monitoring has been on the lookout for that, the water quality testing is also on the lookout for that, we haven't seen any spikes since the actual explosion. And so, you know, I compel anyone who is experienced in adverse health impacts, to consult with their local physician or consult with the local health agency, because we want people to seek help first and foremost, and secondly, we want to know about these adverse health impacts so that we can connect all of

these dots.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: The company had 48 hours to respond to our order and then they have a set period to provide us a work plan, so they didn't have to provide a work plan in 48 hours. With the level of detail that I expect from this company, not leaving any stones unturned, 48 hours isn't enough to get the level of detail I need, and so the company has responded within that 48-hour window that they would comply with the order, and I expect them to turn their homework in on time, and we're looking forward to that completed work plan.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know, one of the things that we're hoping to do is converse with the community about some of the anxieties. Obviously, we believe very strongly in our state, local, and federal partnership and our response to this emergency. But there are some things that the communities have expressed, like concerns that their homes may have, you know, have some dust of some particles that they'd like to have cleaned. So, you know there is no request that I would say is too small to listen to. We want to have that conversation directly with the community so we can respond to those needs. We want people to feel comfortable living in this community, and rest assured that all of us, state, local, and federal government, we don't want a black eye on this community. This community is strong, this community is ready to bounce back, and we want to be sure that the community understands that we're not leaving until that happens.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: I understand the sentiment because this community is experiencing a trauma, but I also have met with enough students and teachers and business owners, the leadership of this mayor, this is a strong community, and if we work together, and if we're transparent, this community will bounce back, and some like the mayor and local business owners think it'll bounce back even better. We don't want any stigmas, we want to be very transparent, but let me be clear, Norfolk Southern will clean up this mess, we will be very transparent, and we will ensure that this community is made whole again.

Unidentified Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen we have time for one more question. I just want to note that we have experts from EPA, FEMA, all sorts of federal agencies.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: You know, I understand the concern and no matter how much testing we do, no matter how much data we provide, people are going to have those concerns. We are going to, as a federal family, have full, strong, transparent conversations with this company so that they can make this community whole, that is a part of that conversation.

(Inaudible question)

Administrator Michael Regan: I would not, I'm a father of a nine-year-old. I think we have to all agree that we wish this accident didn't occur. The accident occurred, and as a result some of our creeks and our streams have pollution in them. We're working very hard to clean up that pollution. For the time being, while the pollution is present, as a father, I would not advise anybody, adult or child, play in the creeks and streams. What we've said is, the drinking water has been tested. If the drinking water has been tested and a green light has been given, then we feel confident in that. But while we're cleaning up this disaster site, I wouldn't advise that anyone play in water that's contaminated, or soil that's contaminated. This is an ongoing effort to efficiently and effectively clean up the mess that Norfolk Southern caused.