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Coal train derails in Columbia River Gorge

A railroad spokesman says about 30 cars of a 125-car coal train bound from Wyoming's Powder River Basin to British Columbia have derailed along a Columbia River Gorge route east of Pasco, Wash., blocking a main rail line.

The Associated Press

PASCO, Wash. —

A railroad spokesman says about 30 cars of a 125-car coal train bound from Wyoming's Powder River Basin to British Columbia have derailed along a Columbia River Gorge route east of Pasco, Wash., blocking a main rail line.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe spokesman Gus Melonas said no injuries were reported in the Monday evening derailment.

He says the majority of the derailed cars ended up on their sides and an undetermined amount of coal spilled. Melonas says no environmental threat was reported.

Railroad officials are on site and the cause of the derailment is under investigation.

Melonas says more than 30 trains use that track daily. Heavy equipment was being dispatched from Pasco to shove the rail cars off the line so crews can replace the damaged tracks. BNSF hopes to reopen the rail line as soon as Tuesday.

Melonas says some rail traffic is being rerouted via Wenatchee, Wash., as well as the Seattle to Vancouver, Wash., route.

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Coal train derailment

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Photo 1 of 5

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A loaded coal train passing through Mesa derailed Monday evening, knocking about 30 cars off the track and sparking a major cleanup effort well into today. Mesa resident Tony Eveland took this photo from the hill near his home. The two-person crew was not hurt but the wreck sent a cloud of black coal dust into the sky. The accident happened at 6:30 p.m. and within two hours, 40 personnel were dispatched to the small town in north Franklin County to work on the site through the night, according to BNSF Railway Co. TONY EVELAND — Special to the Herald

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Coal train derailment

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Photo 2 of 5

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Coal train derailment

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Coal train derailment

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> Photo 5 of 5

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2 bodies inside car found in wreckage from train derailment

July 05, 2012 | By Jonathan Bullington and Jon Hilkevitch | Tribune reporters

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A second body has been found in a car that was buried by debris and wreckage from a train derailment and bridge collapse near Northbrook, officials said.

Officials initially said no one was injured when the train hauling coal derailed on Union Pacific tracks near Willow Road and Shermer Avenue around 1:45 p.m. Wednesday. But this morning, crews spotted the bumper of a car and dug around it with shovels, officials said.



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Shortly before 1 p.m., workers could be seen clearing off what appeared to be the windshield, then covering the area with a blue tarp.

Officials on the scene initially said one body was inside but were checking for other victims. Later, officials said a second body had been found in the car. Their identities have not been released, but officials said one of them is a man.

The car, with the bodies inside, was loaded onto a flatbed truck and taken to the Cook County medical examiner's office.

The car was discovered at about 10 a.m., Globerger said. The crews had been working through the night since 5 p.m. Wednesday. "With 27 rail cars, full of coal, there was no way to get in to discover the car until this morning," Glenview Fire Chief Wayne Globerger said. "Keep in mind, we're talking tons (of debris), here."

He said crews would continue looking for any other victims.

While the investigation of the derailment continues, extreme heat causing steel rails to expand is a possible cause of the derailment and subsequent bridge collapse, a Union Pacific Railroad spokesman said Thursday.

The investigation is likely to take months, but the sequence of events is now clear, according to the UP.

The preliminary investigation has ruled out the failure of the bridge as the trigger to the accident, said UP spokesman Mark Davis. The bridge was not designed to carry the load of 28 coal cars that derailed, each weighing 75 tons to 85 tons, on the 86-foot bridge, Davis said.

Davis confirmed that UP inspectors were on the tracks checking for possible abnormalities in track gauge or shifting before the accident. Such inspections are routinely conducted twice a day during extreme heat or cold, he said.

Because of the "heat order," a 40 mph slow zone order, down from 50 mph normally on that segment of track, was in effect at the time of the accident, Davis said. An event recorder in the locomotive showed that the train was traveling at 37 mph when it derailed, he said.

"We ruled out the bridge failing and then the train derailling, based on the discussion with the train crew" as well as viewing the images from a camera on the train, Davis said. "The derailment occurred and then what happened was that 28 cars piled onto the bridge structure. Under all that weight, the bridge went down."

Davis said workers plan to use stone fill to close up the gap where the bridge was and install temporary tracks to get the trains moving again through the area. The railroad will have to design and build a new

bridge, which will take some time, he said. The bridge was just rebuilt last summer.

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A train derailed in the same area in November of 2009. A train headed southwest on the track derailed, hitting a train that was traveling northeast.

Eighteen cars were derailed: 14 on the southbound train, four on the other. Two rail cars fell under the viaduct at Shermer Road.

In Wednesday's derailment, Tony Nielsen said he was working in a nearby office building when he heard the train and then "the whole building shook."

He said that although they often feel the rumble of the trains going past, he and his co-workers ran outside when they felt the building shake.

"The train was already derailed; the bridge had collapsed," he said.

Tribune reporter Carlos Sadovi and WGN-TV contributed

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26 hurt when Amtrak derails along Columbia Gorge route

An Amtrak passenger-train locomotive with four cars derailed on the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge, injuring 26 people.

By [The Associated Press](#)

HOME VALLEY, Wash. — An Amtrak passenger-train locomotive with four cars derailed on the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge, injuring 26 people.

One person was airlifted to Legacy Emanuel Hospital and Medical Center in nearby Portland, Ore., said Legacy spokesman Will Morton, but he could not reveal the person's condition. Twenty-four people were treated and released at other hospitals; one person was admitted to a hospital in Hood River, Ore.

The train's four cars remained partially upright, leaning at a 45-degree angle against an embankment alongside the track, after the engine's wheels left the track Sunday morning, Amtrak spokeswoman Marcie Golgoski said.

The accident occurred about 40 miles east of Vancouver with 107 passengers and a crew of eight aboard.

"We heard a big bang, bang, bang, and all hell broke loose," said Darrell Halseth, 66, of Kalama, a passenger on the train. "(The train car) just laid over on its side and slid, so it was a pretty wild ride."

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co., which owns and operates the track used by Amtrak, rushed equipment and about three dozen workers to the site but did not expect to reopen the line until today, said spokesman Gus Melonas.

Amtrak hoped to resume service on the line by Tuesday, Amtrak spokeswoman Sarah Swain said Sunday night. Buses were being used to take passengers between Portland and Spokane in the meantime, she said.

After the accident, those who could travel were loaded onto school buses and taken to Vancouver, and to Portland, which was the destination of the train that had left Spokane earlier in the day.

Two people were taken across the river to Hood River (Ore.) Memorial Hospital, said spokeswoman Barbara Young. One was treated and released and the other — a pregnant woman in her second trimester with abdominal pains — was admitted for observation.

Ten people were treated and released at Skyline Hospital in White Salmon, said Administrator Mike Madden. Twelve people were treated and released for facial injuries and bruises at Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver. One person was treated and released from Oregon Health and Science University Hospital in Portland.

Medics treated an unknown number of other people for minor injuries at the scene, said Erik Anderson, director of Skamania County Emergency Medical Services.



enlarge

THE SEATTLE TIMES

The National Transportation Safety Board and BNSF were investigating the cause of the accident.

About 115 passengers and crew members were on board when the locomotive and four cars derailed about 9:30 a.m. PDT, an Amtrak statement said.

The derailment occurred on the main Columbia Gorge rail line. About 40 trains use that track daily — two passenger trains, one in each direction, and dozens of freight trains. As of late Sunday night nine freight trains had been rerouted, Melonas said.

Video

A bag's journey through Sea-Tac Airport

Have you ever wondered how your luggage travels to your plane after leaving the ticket counter at Sea-Tac Airport? The answer, it turns out, is a long and winding path on a part of the 9.3 mile conveyor belt system.



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Making Environmental Progress, Improving Local Communities

Accomplishments of the EPA Region 10 Superfund Program



Bottom left cover photo contributed by Dan Rone.

A Snapshot of Region 10 Accomplishments

The Superfund Program in EPA Region 10 continues its strong record of addressing serious contamination problems throughout the Northwest and Alaska. I am proud of the progress we are achieving at our largest and most challenging sites, including Bunker Hill, the Lower Duwamish Waterway, Commencement Bay, and Portland Harbor. At the same time, we have completed rapid cleanup actions at many smaller sites and are preparing for final cleanup at others. I am pleased to offer this report summarizing our Superfund Program's major work to protect human health and the environment in Region 10.

Here is a brief summary of notable accomplishments in 2003:

Actions Completed in Fiscal Year 2003

- 100 site assessments
- 19 cleanup decision documents (*Records of Decision and Action Memos*)
- 5 cleanup negotiations
- 6 remedial designs
- 13 remedial actions
- 2 construction completions
- 27 five-year reviews
- 7 cost recovery actions totaling almost \$24 million
- 5,300-plus responses to spill notification calls
- 31 emergency response actions
- 14 time-critical removals

At most sites, EPA Region 10 became involved due to a request from a local, state, or federal agency, or a federally recognized Indian tribe. This year we also received seven citizen petitions requesting investigation of sites where hazardous waste contamination might be present. Through our Removal Program, we received over 5,300 notifications to our 24-hour duty officer, and responded to 31 emergencies and spills that posed an imminent threat to people or the environment.

Since the inception of the Superfund Program in 1980, EPA Region 10 has removed a total of 1,731 sites from the Region 10 Superfund inventory. About 500 sites remain in the inventory to be studied. Of the sites studied to date, Region 10 has listed 95 on the National Priorities List (NPL). Final cleanup construction has been completed at 60 of these sites, and it is under way at another 23 sites. In our Region, 25 sites have been deleted from the NPL.

This year the Superfund budget was under intense public scrutiny. While our overall Superfund budget in Region 10 has held steady for the past few years, we continue to experience significant demand for Superfund Program services. I'm pleased that this year EPA was able to provide \$12 million in new funding for McCormick and Baxter and \$10 million for the Coeur d'Alene Basin. To stretch cleanup dollars and to ensure that responsible parties shoulder their cleanup obligations, Region 10 maintains a strong Superfund enforcement program dedicated to fast and effective cleanup.

Region 10 is strongly committed to attaining cleanup progress at all important sites. I attribute the lion's share of our success to the strong relationships we have built with our state, federal, tribal, and community partners. Working together, we have used cleanup dollars effectively to deliver tangible results.



L. John Iani, Regional Administrator
EPA Region 10

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Making a Neighborhood Safe
North Ridge Estates Site, Klamath Falls, Oregon
Congressional District 2



EPA takes fast action to remove asbestos from the North Ridge Estates neighborhood.

In summer 2003, EPA took action to remove asbestos contamination from 22 residences in the North Ridge Estates neighborhood near Klamath Falls. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality asked EPA to get involved when it learned that asbestos-laden debris throughout the subdivision could threaten the health of residents. EPA's work included removing more than 14,000 pounds of asbestos-containing materials from residential properties, and sampling air and soil to see if people were at risk.

More than two dozen homes at North Ridge Estates were built during the last decade on plots where military barracks once stood. The asbestos contamination originated from siding, roofing, and steam pipes from about 80 buildings constructed in the 1940's. Many of the buildings were demolished in place, leaving a dangerous asbestos problem for future residents.

Unified Command Tackles Train Derailment
Union Pacific Railroad Derailment, The Dalles, Oregon
Congressional District 2

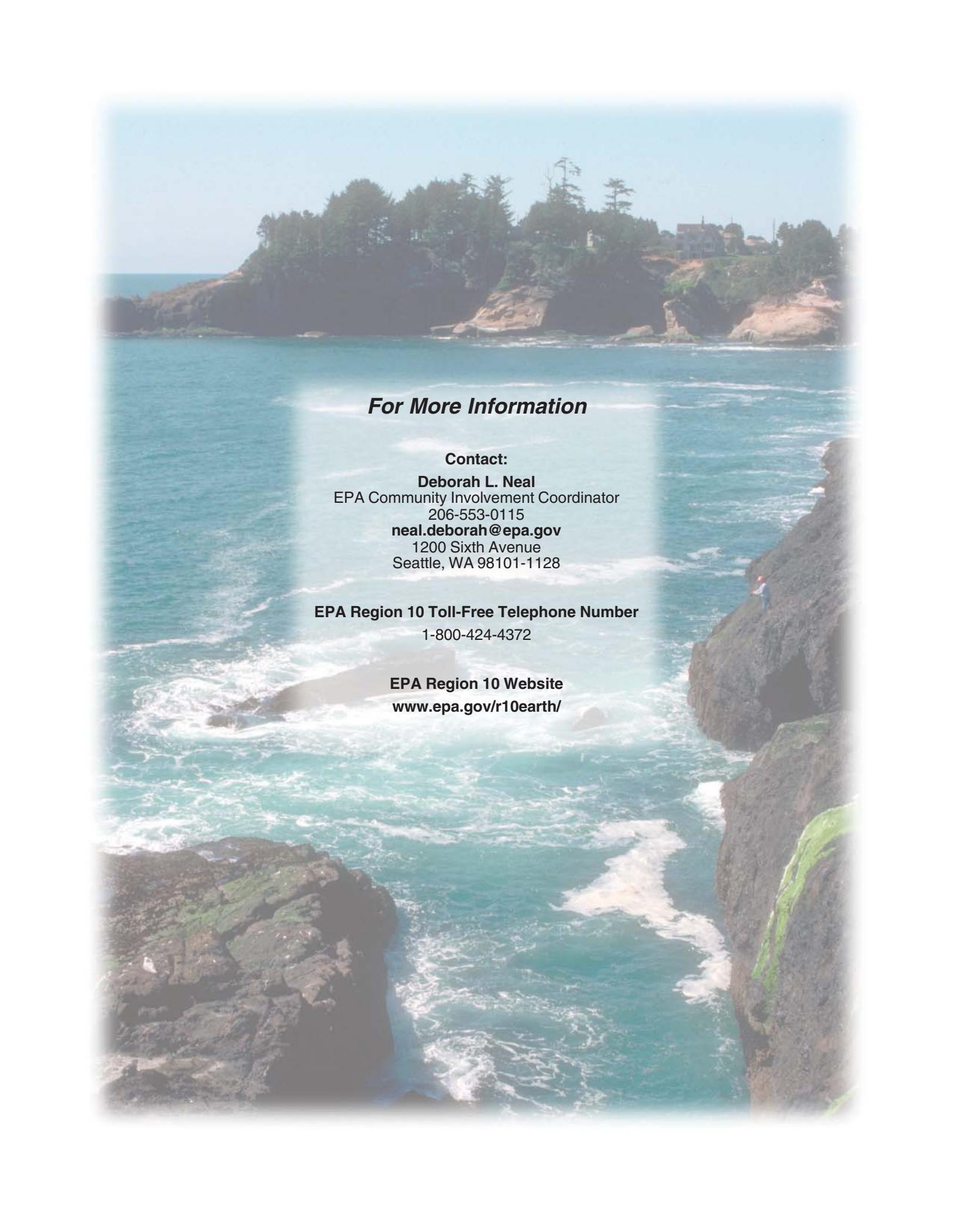
In January 2003, when 53 train cars were derailed just outside The Dalles and adjacent to Interstate 84, EPA took swift action. Within the hour, EPA arrived at the site to find five derailed cars containing hazardous materials, including phenol, anhydrous ammonia, arsenic acid, and vinyl chloride. EPA also responded to 14 cars containing oils, four of which were breached and leaking within about 100 yards of the Columbia River.

EPA, tribal representatives, the State, Wasco County, and Union Pacific quickly formed a Unified Command to address the situation. Working together, the Command safely removed four cars containing hazardous materials and pumped the contents of the fifth car into a tanker for removal. With EPA oversight, Union Pacific also cleaned up the soils contaminated with oil.

The derailment occurred in a culturally significant area within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The Yakima, Warm Springs, and Umatilla Indian tribes have cultural and historic connections to the area. During the cleanup, the Unified Command made sure that culturally and historically significant items weren't disturbed. At the tribes' request, EPA also made sure that soils removed from the site were returned after they were treated.



EPA responds at a train derailment where freight cars containing oils and hazardous materials jumped the track.



For More Information

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