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East Palestine Update: Evacuation Area Extended, Controlled Release of Rail Car Contents Planned for 3:30 p.m.

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(EAST PALESTINE, Ohio)— Following new modeling information conducted this morning by the Ohio National Guard and U.S. Department of Defense, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro are ordering an immediate evacuation in a one-mile by two-mile area surrounding East Palestine which includes parts of both Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The vinyl chloride contents of five rail cars are currently unstable and could potentially explode, causing deadly disbursement of shrapnel and toxic fumes. To alleviate the risk of uncontrollable shrapnel from an explosion, Norfolk Southern Railroad is planning a controlled release of the vinyl chloride at approximately 3:30 p.m. today.

According to Norfolk Southern Railroad, the controlled release process involves the burning of the rail cars' chemicals, which will release fumes into the air that can be deadly if inhaled. Based on current weather patterns and the expected flow of the smoke and fumes, anyone who remains in the red affected area is facing grave danger of death. Anyone who remains in the yellow impacted area is at a high risk of severe injury, including skin burns and serious lung damage.

In Ohio, the areas at risk include eastern East Palestine, including Parker, South Pleasant, BFI Access Road, Taggart Street, North Pleasant Road, Failor Road, and East Martin, east of Pleasant. Those who need help evacuating the area should call 330-457-0733 or 330-457-2455. According to the Columbiana County Sheriff, those with children in their homes who decline to evacuate may be subject to arrest.

In Pennsylvania, anyone needing assistance should call the State Police Beaver Station at 724-773-7400. Anyone in the area in need of information regarding the evacuation and shelter in place orders should call Beaver County Emergency Services at 724-775-0880.

It is believed that most individuals have already left the impacted areas, but law enforcement in both states are currently working to ensure that all individuals have left the vicinity prior to the controlled release. Depending on the exact amount of material currently inside the rail cars, the railroad estimates that the controlled release of chemicals could burn for 1 to 3 hours. It is unknown when residents will be able to return to their homes but an announcement will be made when it is safe to return.