# Whistleblower Accuses EPA of Mishandling Ohio Train Derailment Response



### Whistleblower Criticizes EPA's Response to Ohio Train Derailment

A whistleblower has raised concerns about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) handling of the Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, in February 2023.

The whistleblower, Robert Kroutil, a former contractor with the EPA and a scientist with over four decades of experience, claims the agency delayed deploying the ASPECT plane, equipped with advanced sensors to detect chemical contamination. The plane did not fly over the site until four days post-derailment, even though it is designed to be operational within an hour of a chemical disaster.

On February 6, 2023, a controlled burn of five tank cars filled with vinyl chloride resulted in a large black plume of smoke. The ASPECT plane was used a day later but only captured eight minutes of data, which Kroutil deemed insufficient and inconclusive.

Kroutil alleges the EPA altered the final report to declare the vent-and-burn successful, despite the limited data. He also claimed the EPA turned off the plane’s chemical sensors over certain areas and discouraged mentions of "East Palestine" in communications to potentially avoid records requests.

Residents of East Palestine reported health issues such as respiratory problems and rashes after being advised to return home shortly after the incident. The EPA defended its actions, citing weather conditions for the delay and stating that the ASPECT plane was one part of a broader monitoring effort.

The Government Accountability Project (GAP), which represents Kroutil, has requested a formal investigation into the EPA’s response.

The derailment cleanup has cost over $1 billion, involving the removal of tons of contaminated soil and millions of gallons of wastewater. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) later confirmed that the controlled burn was likely unnecessary, as the tank cars were cooling.

### Key Details:

* Event: Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio.
* Date: February 3, 2023.
* Whistleblower: Robert Kroutil, former EPA contractor.
* Concerns: Delay in deploying ASPECT plane, insufficient data collection, altered reports.
* EPA’s Defense: Weather conditions, comprehensive ground monitoring.
* Outcome: Ongoing health issues for residents, over $1 billion cleanup costs.
* Investigation: Formal inquiry requested by GAP.