



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

Norfolk Southern Railway general merchandise freight train 32N
derailment with subsequent hazardous material release and fires,
in East Palestine, Ohio, on February 3, 2023

GROUP	H
EXHIBIT	
47	

Agency / Organization

Norfolk Southern

Title

Statement for the Record – Scott Deutsch

Scott Deutsch, Opening Statement

Panel 1: "Hazard Communications and Emergency Responder Preparedness for the Initial Emergency Response"

Good morning. My name is Scott Deutsch and I have been a Regional Hazardous Materials Manager at Norfolk Southern since October of 2015. Before that, I was a first responder with a county emergency services agency and have served in public safety for 40 years with 22 years' experience in the chemical industry. Every day, I work alongside my Norfolk Southern colleagues to ensure hazardous material compliance, facilitate first responder training, and improve our emergency preparedness and response efforts.

I want to begin by expressing my regrets to the residents of East Palestine and the surrounding communities. Shortly after the derailment, Norfolk Southern personnel were deployed to the scene and have been on-site ever since. We responded swiftly; within approximately an hour of the derailment, our folks were on-site and providing the Incident Commander critical information to assist with the response. I received the call from my supervisor within minutes of the derailment and immediately left home for East Palestine. While en route, I deployed our hazardous materials contractors and was in communication with Incident Command to provide consist information and to help the Incident Commander direct the first responders to other relevant resources so that they – and we – could do our jobs and help to ensure the safety of the community.

Norfolk Southern, along with everyone involved in responding to the incident, focused on preserving the health and safety of the community and first responders. As a former Assistant Chief of Operations and Training for a public emergency services agency, I understand the risks our first responders face. This is why, shortly after I arrived at the scene of the derailment in

East Palestine, I asked the Incident Commander overseeing first responder efforts to pull back first responders who faced significant danger from numerous rail cars that could have discharged flammable material or other chemicals without warning in an environment with an ignition source already present. For example, vinyl chloride is an extremely flammable compound, and the tank cars were engulfed in pool fires. With first responders, some of whom were in aerial baskets near the fires, there was a potential for significant loss of life. I am grateful to the Incident Commander for his leadership in keeping the first responders safe.

Like everyone else involved in responding to the derailment, Norfolk Southern and its contractors were forced to react rapidly and thoughtfully based on the circumstances unfolding rapidly at the scene. We had to provide advice to decision-makers, drawing on the technical information and resources available and our combined decades of emergency response training and experience. The advice of Norfolk Southern and its contractors to the Unified Command on these tank cars represented our best effort to weigh the risks we saw in front of us and make recommendations accordingly. From the night of the accident through the end of the immediate incident response, we consistently shared our observations and concerns with the Incident Commander and Unified Command and followed prevailing guidance. We are grateful for the leadership of Fire Chief Drabick, Governor DeWine, Governor Shapiro, Mayor Trent Conaway, Columbiana County EMA Peggy Clark, and the courage and heroism of first responders from East Palestine and the surrounding communities.

At this time, I am glad to answer any questions the Board has about our incident response.