

ABC's *Good Morning America*

02/21/23

7:01:03 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: New This Morning; Toxic Train Disaster Fallout]

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: Toxic train disaster fallout as a clinic opens to treat suffering residents in Ohio. This morning, how the Biden administration is responding. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg joins us live.

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7:11:29 a.m.

2 minutes and 4 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: New This Morning; Toxic Train Derailment Fallout; Clinic Opening for Residents Two Weeks After Derailment]

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're going to get the latest now on the toxic train derailment in Ohio. Officials have opened a clinic for residents as many complain of constant headaches and eye irritation. Mona Kosar Abdi is on the scene, good morning, Mona.

MONA KOSAR ABDI: George, good morning. I'm standing in front of the church here in East Palestine where the Ohio Department of Health will be operating a medical clinic for concerned residents starting at noon. We're told that they were getting calls from across the state line in Pennsylvania. But, right now, they are prioritizing locals. This morning, Norfolk Southern announcing more than seven tons of contaminated soil and over one million gallons of contaminated water have now been excavated from the derailment site. In a statement, the company adding that "the material will be transported to landfills and disposal facilities that are designed to accept it safely." This as a much anticipated clinic staffed with Ohio Department of Health, CDC, and HHS personnel is about to open. It's here to address health concerns of any resident, including the uninsured after multiple complaints of skin, eye and throat irritation.

DANIEL MIKKELSEN: They're doing everything they can to take care of the community.

ABDI: We met 11-year-old Zach and his mom at this church turned into a Norfolk Southern reimbursement center. They live less than a mile from the crash site. He says when he and his older brother saw the fireball, they thought it was a house fire and drove closer to help.

"ZACH": Ever since that incident happened, our face has been burning and it's really bad.
[SCREEN WIPE] Headaches, massive, almost passing out.

ABDI: Zach and his family are now living in a hotel. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg calling for new regulations, including increased inspections on routes trains use to transport toxic

chemicals. It's unclear if such measurements could have prevented a derailment like this one. And today, both the governors of Ohio and Pennsylvania will be visiting with the EPA administrator and, of course, tomorrow former President Donald Trump will be in town. George.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up on *GMA*; Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Live; How Biden Administration Is Responding to Ohio Train Disaster]

STEPHANOPOULOS: Okay, Mona, thanks. And Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg will join us live in our next half hour with more on the administration's response.

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7:18:00 a.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: *GMA* One-on-One; Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Live; How Biden Administration Is Responding to Ohio Train Disaster]

STEPHANOPOULOS: And how the Biden administration is trying to hold the rail industry accountable after the derailment in Ohio. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is going to join us live.

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7:31:43 a.m.

4 minutes and 32 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: *GMA* One-on-One; Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Live; How Biden Administration Is Responding to Ohio Train Disaster]

STEPHANOPOULOS: Right now, we're going to get more on the toxic train derailment in Ohio. The Biden administration announcing new steps this morning to hold the rail industry accountable. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg is joining us live this morning. Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us this morning. You know, you've got two big missions helping the people on the ground in East Palestine right now preventing something like this from happening again. What is the administration doing on both fronts?

TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY PETE BUTTIGIEG: That's right, so one of the biggest things to support the people of East Palestine is to make sure that they have access to the public health support they need, to the environmental resources they need. That's why the EPA administrator Michael Regan will be on the ground there again and why CDC is going out there but there's another side to the story which is making sure that we move forward on rail safety in this country. The NTSB, National Transportation Safety Board, is an independent body and they are independently doing their investigative work, but we don't have to wait for their final report to know that some things need to change and so, today, we are pushing forward a three-part drive

on rail safety, things that we're doing at the Department of Transportation to raise the bar, things that we need help from Congress to do in order to hold rail companies accountable and things that this industry needs to do differently. I got to tell you ever since I came into this job I have seen the power that multibillion dollar railroad companies wield and they fight safety regulations tooth and nail. That's got to change. The future cannot be like the past and I am calling for that change to begin right away.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You're beginning to say it should begin right away, but Ohio Senator J.D. Vance said the administration was loosening rail regulations.

BUTTIGIEG: No, I'm happy to talk with him more if he wants to understand the work that we're doing. For example, we were advancing the requirement on two-person crews on trains. Believe it or not, the rail industry has been pushing to be allowed to have trains have only one human being on board. Imagine what happens if there's an issue on a train that's a mile long or longer and there's only one person to check on something three-quarters of the way back in the train. Now, the last administration froze that rule making. We have been advancing that in order to push safety. We have been working to make sure that we have more authority to hold rail companies accountable and so, one thing Senator Vance and others in Congress could do to help would be to give us more teeth by raising the fines. Right now, even for the most egregious safety violation like ones involving hazardous materials that result in fatalities, Congress has passed a statute that caps our ability to fine at about \$250,000. And that might sound like a lot of money for somebody going through daily life, but to a multibillion dollar company like Norfolk Southern, it is dust. So, I'm urging Congress to do things like work with us to raise the fines, work with us on fortifying tank cars. Under the Obama administration, a rule went into effect calling for a stronger type of tank car to be fully rolled out across the industry by 2025. That got pushed back by an act of Congress to 2029.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The administration —

BUTTIGIEG: I'm calling on Congress to work with us to move that date back up but also the rail industry can do that without us making them and I hope they will make that change while we simultaneously work on the regulation.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Live on GMA; Transportation Secretary on Ohio Train Disaster; Did Biden Administration Act Fast Enough After Derailment?]

STEPHANOPOULOS: — the administration has come under some fire for its response. The mayor of East Palestine says it took nearly two weeks for the White House to contact him. There were shouts of where is Pete Buttigieg at a town hall meeting last week. What's your response to that? When are you going to go to East Palestine?

BUTTIGIEG: Well, I am planning to go and our folks were on the ground from the first hours. I do want to stress that the NTSB needs to be able to do its work independently. But when I go, the focus is going to be on action. Look, I was mayor of my hometown for eight years. We dealt with a lot of disasters, natural and human. And one of the things I noticed very quickly is that there's

two kinds of people who show up when you have that kind of disaster experience: people who are there because they have a specific job to do and are there to get something done and people who are there to look good and have their picture taken. When I go, it will be about action on rail safety like the actions that we are calling on Congress to help us with that we're calling on industry to take and that we are undertaking ourselves as a department to help make sure these kind of things don't happen in the future.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Secretary Buttigieg, thanks for your time this morning.

BUTTIGIEG: Thank you. Good to be with you.

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8:00:28 a.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Fallout; Toxic Train Disaster]

STEPHANOPOULOS: Toxic train disaster fallout as a clinic opens to treat suffering residents in Ohio. This morning, how the Biden administration is responding.

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8:04:53 a.m.

2 minutes and 4 seconds

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STEPHANOPOULOS: We're going to get the latest now on the toxic train derailment in Ohio. Officials have opened a clinic for residents as many complain of constant headaches and eye irritation. I want to go back to Mona Kosar Abdi on the scene, good morning, Mona.

ABDI: George, good morning. In just a few hours the Ohio Department of Health will be opening a medical clinic inside this church behind me here in East Palestine for concerned residents who have been complaining about health issues since the train derailment. Ohio Governor Mike DeWine says this sends a message to this community that, he "hears them." This morning, Norfolk Southern announcing more than seven tons of contaminated soil and over one million gallons of contaminated water have now been excavated from the derailment site. In a statement, the company adding that "the material will be transported to landfills and disposal facilities that are designed to accept it safely." This as a much anticipated clinic staffed with Ohio Department of Health, CDC, and HHS personnel is about to open. It's here to address health concerns of any resident, including the uninsured after multiple complaints of skin, eye and throat irritation. We met 11-year-old Zach and his mom at this church turned into a Norfolk Southern reimbursement center. They live less than a mile from the crash site. He says when he

and his older brother saw the fireball, they thought it was a house fire and drove closer to help.

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BUTTIGIEG: Ever since I came into this job, I have seen the power that multibillion dollar railroad companies wield and they fight safety regulations tooth and nail. That’s got to change.

ABDI: And we are expecting a lot of high-profile visits here in East Palestine this week, starting with today. Both the Ohio and Pennsylvania governor will be visiting with the EPA administrator and, of course, tomorrow former president Trump will be in town. George. Robin.

ROBIN ROBERTS: Alright, Mona, thank you for your reporting.