

Phillips 66, Wood River Refinery Issues Statement About Train Cars' Leak, Prepares Response To State Requests

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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WOOD RIVER - Melissa Erker, Director, Phillips 66-Wood River Refinery, Government and Community Relations Director, released a statement Saturday afternoon about the railroad tank cars that spewed sulfuric acid.

“The Wood River Refinery team has been working with the Wood River Fire Department and Norfolk Southern Railroad at the railcar response in the Norfolk Southern Rail Yard,” Erker said. “The priority of the Wood River Refinery is the safety of the community and responders, as well as to provide technical expertise for the response. The refinery has been contacted by the IEPA and Illinois Attorney General’s office about the incident. The refinery is working to respond to the information requests from the state.”

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has referred an enforcement action to the Illinois Attorney General’s office against Phillips 66 Company, located at 900 South Central Avenue in Roxana (Madison County).

Between May 28 and May 30, 2021, four railroad tank cars were loaded with spent sulfuric acid originating at the Phillips 66 facility. On June 2, 2021, the tank cars were loaded onto a train on Norfolk Southern Railway and Kansas City Southern Railway rail lines. At approximately 3 p.m., a pressure relief disk on one of the tank cars ruptured and sulfuric acid began venting to the atmosphere. At that time, the train was sitting on the railroad tracks located north of Rand Avenue and east of State Route 3 near Hartford and Wood River. A Kansas City Southern Railway employee was injured during the rupture and was taken to the hospital for treatment and released. During the evening of June 2, two other railcars also began venting sulfuric acid. A fourth rail car began venting the morning of June 3.

At 4:30 a.m. on June 3, 2021, the Wood River Fire Department issued a shelter in place order for the area in Wood River and Roxana. Fire departments from Wood River, East Alton, Godfrey, Roxana, Rosewood Heights, Alton, and Edwardsville responded to the incident, as well as Madison County HAZMAT Team and the Madison County Emergency Management Agency. Representatives from Illinois EPA and U.S. EPA were also on site. The fire departments have deployed water curtains to control the plume of sulfuric acid; however, active venting continues.

The referral asks the Attorney General to require Phillips 66 to immediately stop the release and conduct a root cause analysis of the cause of the rupture. In addition, the Illinois EPA said the company should submit documentation to the Illinois EPA including the cause analysis report, all air monitoring data, calculations of the amount of sulfuric acid and SO₂ released, and a work plan to address the removal and disposal of any remaining material in the railcars.

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