

New report finds up to 36 million pounds of vinyl chloride are transported across North American railways at any moment

For the first time ever, new report uncovers quantities and maps the route of vinyl chloride rail shipments by America's largest producer, OxyVinyls

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Today, [a new report](#) released by Toxic-Free Future and Material Research reveals, for the first time, that at any

given moment up to 36 million pounds of toxic vinyl chloride are being shipped via rail by America's largest producer, OxyVinyls. A year ago, a disastrous train wreck in East Palestine, Ohio, alerted many of this dangerous practice—now, the new report, titled Toxic Cargo: How rail transport of vinyl chloride puts millions at risk, an analysis one year after the Ohio train derailment, shows this practice is widespread and continues to put communities at risk. The report is the first to map the most likely path of the longest train route that vinyl chloride regularly travels across the country, putting millions at risk from Texas to New Jersey.

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“As we remember the train wreck that devastated the community of East Palestine a year ago, our new analysis shows that OxyVinyls, the company shipping hazardous vinyl chloride by rail, for use by retailers like The Home Depot that sell PVC products, is putting many more communities at risk,” said Mike Schade, director of Mind the Store, a program of Toxic-Free Future. “The people of East Palestine were forced to learn the hard way that tank

cars of vinyl chloride rumbling through your town can mean disaster for your health and your community. It is outrageous that the amount of vinyl chloride involved in that tragedy reflects only a small percentage of the millions of pounds that is transported at any given moment. Retailers like The Home Depot need to take this lesson and move from PVC to safer materials



that don't put communities at risk."

The report estimates that more than three million people live within a mile of the train route, which passes through eight major cities from Houston to Philadelphia. In addition to the East Palestine, Ohio disaster in 2023, another accident in 2012 in Paulsboro, New Jersey involved the same route. In both cases, the trains were traveling to OxyVinyls PVC plants in New Jersey using nearly 2,000 miles of track, the longest route in the country for rail transport of vinyl chloride.

Yearly, an estimated 1.5 billion pounds of this dangerous chemical travels from OxyVinyls chemical plants in Texas to OxyVinyls and Orbia PVC plastics factories in NJ, IL, and Niagara Falls, Ontario. The chemical is used to make PVC building materials and other products sold at major retailers, like The Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement chain. In conjunction with the new report, today Toxic-Free Future sent a letter to The Home Depot CEO, launching a campaign urging the company to phase out PVC and transition to safer solutions.

Hilary Flint, vice president of Unity Council for the East Palestine Train Derailment and director of communications and community engagement for Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community, said "Vinyl chloride was found just outside my bedroom window and I'm convinced the chemicals from the train derailment have significantly affected my health. I've had sinus congestion, irritated eyes, skin rashes, and a bloody nose for a year now. The only advice my doctor could give me was to remove myself from my home. So I'm currently footing the bill for a rental home and utilities on top of the home my family has lived in for four generations."

A known human carcinogen, vinyl chloride is associated with liver cancer, lung and brain cancer, lymphoma, leukemia, breast cancer, and numerous other health problems. Vinyl chloride is the basic building block chemical for making PVC plastic, often referred to as the "poison plastic."

"We owe it to the people of East Palestine to end the use of this dangerous plastic that is putting communities from Houston to Philadelphia at risk," said Erika Schreder, science director for Toxic-Free Future. "The Home Depot has a responsibility to stock its shelves with materials that can be made, transported, and used safely."

The number one use of PVC is in building materials, such as luxury vinyl tile (LVT) flooring. OxyVinyls and Orbia's PVC plastics from Pedricktown, NJ, are made into building materials by corporations like AHF, which sells Armstrong brand vinyl flooring through The Home Depot. As of late 2023, The Home Depot online catalog listed more than 50 styles of Armstrong vinyl flooring made in the U.S., under the brand names "Excelon Imperial" and "Bruce."

Toxic-Free Future calls for immediate action to transition to safer solutions. The report includes clear recommendations for states and EPA as well as The Home Depot to ban vinyl chloride and PVC products and transition to healthier alternatives.

This investigation comes one month after the U.S. EPA announced it is taking the first step to

prioritize vinyl chloride under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) for potential regulatory action, and at a time when numerous U.S. states such as California are expected to consider legislation banning PVC in packaging. In 2023, Washington state announced a proposal to identify chlorinated chemicals, such as vinyl chloride used to make PVC, as a priority chemical class as part of the next cycle of regulations in the Safer Products for Washington law, the nation's strongest law regulating toxic chemicals in products and packaging.

"States are starting to act to protect communities from hazardous chemicals like vinyl chloride and PVC," said Sarah Doll, national director of Safer States. "We anticipate numerous states will consider policies to restrict the use of PVC in 2024 legislative sessions as they recognize how significant the PVC problem is."

Manufacturing vinyl chloride and PVC results in toxic air and climate pollution. Today's new report found that in 2022, OxyVinyls and Orbia ranked as the country's third and fifth leading sources of vinyl chloride air pollution, and, EPA calculates they released more than 3.3 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. Further, OxyVinyls and Orbia have been out of compliance with Clean Air, Clean Water, and other federal environmental regulations within the last 18 months.

Read the [full press release](https://toxicfreefuture.org/press-room/new-research-reveals-up-to-36-million-pounds-of-toxic-chemical-vinyl-chloride-are-transported-across-north-american-railways-at-any-moment-putting-millions-at-risk) here: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/press-room/new-research-reveals-up-to-36-million-pounds-of-toxic-chemical-vinyl-chloride-are-transported-across-north-american-railways-at-any-moment-putting-millions-at-risk>

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