

Sunday, July 2, 2006

Train derails in McKean Co., leaks caustic chemical into a trout stream

Twenty-nine boxcars and tankers from a Norfolk-Southern train derailed around 9 a.m. Friday, sending about 16,000 gallons of a caustic chemical spilling into a high-quality trout stream, officials said. The derailment happened near the McKean County border with Cameron County. The Elk County Hazmat team was called in to handle the spill. Emergency crews and firefighters were kept from the scene until the Hazmat team determined that it was safe for them to approach. Bruce Manning, deputy director of the McKean County Emergency Management Agency, said the chemical seeped from one tanker, traveled under the railroad tracks, entered a pipe and flowed into Portage Run, a branch of Sinnemahoning Creek. No injuries were reported, but 50 people around Norwich Township were temporarily evacuated because of fears that chlorine gas might leak from one of the tankers, officials said. The tanker was not breached, and crews were working later to either right or empty it. People were warned to keep clear because of the spill of sodium hydroxide, also known as caustic soda or lye, which can cause severe burns.