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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Highway 118 remains closed for clean-up from derailment

GALLUP-Updated information indicates that Highway 118 was closed today at 1 p.m. Traffic is being diverted around Rehoboth on Hogback road, coming out on Route 7048 near Fire Rock Casino. Highway 118 is expected to remain closed until tomorrow as BNSF crews work through the night.

For the community members who reside in South Fork, Padre Canyon and White Cliffs, roads have been bladed by McKinley County. Church Rock Chapter is also attending to roads between Padre Canyon to White Cliffs with their backhoe.

Residents of Church Rock area can also take I-40 East to Exit 33, the Ft. Wingate exit, and get on State Road 118, I-40 frontage road, and go east back to the South Fork Bridge.

On Friday, Oct. 23, at approximately 7 a.m., BNSF Railway reported that upward of 25 cars had derailed east of Gallup, N.M. at the Southfork Bridge that crosses north to Red Rock State Park.

State Road 118, also known as Old Route 66, was shut down between Mile Marker 26 and Mile



It was reported that upward of 25 cars had derailed along the BNSF Railway east of Gallup on the morning of Friday, Oct. 23. (Photo: Ernesto Salazar)

Marker 32 while hazmat crews were on scene to assess a spill from one of the train cars. Hazmat determined the spill was liquid asphalt and was non-hazardous. BNSF Railway is responsible for clean-up of the spill.

President Begaye recently met with Carl R. Ice, President and CEO of BNSF Railway based in

Ft. Worth, TX. CEO Ice assured President Begaye that safety is BNSF's first priority. CEO Ice mentioned that a Navajo group of BNSF worker in Grants, N.M. had recently been recognized for their safety standards.

"This derailment is certainly unfortunate. However, we trust that the New Mexico Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) will be diligent in making sure that anything spilled is not hazardous to the environment or to people. EPA must be forthright in this situation as many of our Navajo people live along the railway," President Begaye said.

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