

## 22 Bentonite Cars Piled Up in Wreck

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Staff Writer

ORIN JUNCTION — North-south traffic on the Burlington Northern Railroad, Inc. line will hopefully be back in business between 4 and 8 a.m. Saturday, according to J. G. Edwards, division superintendent for the railroad from Alliance, Neb.

The railroad tracks were closed about 8:45 a.m. Friday when an eastbound freight train experienced a mechanical problem on one of its cars, causing 22 open-topped cars loaded with bentonite clay to be derailed near Orin Junction, about 12 miles southeast of Douglas.

Twenty of the derailed cars were overturned and piled up, looking like a scattered stack of straws. The bentonite cargo was scattered over the railroad's right-of-way, and the hopper cars were extensively damaged.

The wrecked cars were part of a 20,000-ton shipment of bentonite from the Wyo-Ben Products, Inc. plant near Greybull. The wrecked cars spilled an estimated 1,900 tons of clay, according to Gary Bernard, plant superintendent for Wyo Ben.

In addition to being generally messy, the loose bentonite, which becomes very slippery when wet, combined with snow and mud and made early wreckage removal and clean-up tricky. Large winch trucks were unable to pull damaged hopper cars from the track because they

could not hold their position when winching, and literally pulled themselves up the railroad grade, instead of pulling the cars down the grade.

Large caterpillar-type tractors were called in to both pull and push the wreckage from the road bed. A huge train wrecker unit from Alliance, Neb. was expected to arrive late Friday to help clear the track.

The objective was to get the wrecked hopper cars off the tracks and into the adjoining ditch, so crews could replace the rails and get traffic moving again, said Edwards.

It would be decided later whether to scrap the cars or try to salvage any of them, he said. The bentonite would also be left where it spilled, along the right-of-way, he said.

The wrecked cars were the mid-section of a 200-car freight train. The locomotive and some 90 cars continued south, while about 80 cars were trapped behind the wreckage.

Edwards did not estimate the total damage to the railroad cars and tracks, but it was expected to run into the thousands of dollars.

No one was injured in the accident, but crews had been reported working in the vicinity only shortly before the train went through and the derailment occurred.

### Water Level Rising

At Above Reason

## Bentonite Train Cars Derail (continued)

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