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FLOOR DEBATE

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Adrian Smith, "Cleanup continues at benzene spill site". Scottsbluff, Nebraska: Work is continuing near the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks along Avenue I in Scottsbluff because of indications of dissolved benzene. The chemical was spilled during trail (sic--train) derailment November 4th. November 4th was a good while ago. We are still seeing the repercussions from this derailment. I think everything we develop in the way of information and evidence on this question of two-person crews would indicate that there ought to be a minimum of two people on these trains. But back to the article. Employees of Retec, R-e-t-e-c, a company based in Concord, Massachusetts, are doing the work. First, a well is drilled. Then the hole is filled with a special compound that allows oxygen to be absorbed into the soil, said Retec site manager Dieter G-e-i-t-h-n-e-r, Geithner. Scottsbluff Mayor Dave Boeckner...I wish Senator Smith was here so I could ask him how to pronounce these names, B-o-e-c-k-n-e-r, said he was aware of the drilling. Quote, I know the railroad has gone to do some more test wells that are a little further out than what they have been doing. It's part of their process to continue to monitor any flow of the benzene through the groundwater system in that area, unquote, Boeckner said. He added that the groundwater in the area may be spreading the contamination, quote, somewhat, unquote, but that the railroad is continuing to monitor the situation to see how much movement has occurred. Boeckner said he does not feel the public should be alarmed with the procedure. Quote, they're doing their job. I think this is exactly what we want them to do by being aware of what's going on with the groundwater system and with the potential here for the contamination and to keep track of it and keep removing it, unquote, he said. Concentrations of benzene in the affected area are below drinking water standards, indicating that it can be cleaned up in a relatively short period of time, said Steve Forsberg, the railroad's general director of public affairs and corporate relations. That ends the article. I doubt that a person who is the general director of public affairs and corporate relations for the railroad would acknowledge the existence of any problem created to the public by virtue of a spill of this kind. Senator Smith is back in the Chamber. I'd like to ask him a question.