

Company replacing sections of DM&E railroad

VOLGA (AP) — Kevin Schieffer walks along a stretch of the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern railroad and spots a worn joint separating two sections of track.

"That's where you always have your breakage," says Schieffer, pointing to the defect. "The reason for that breakage is because all of that impact, from hitting that joint."

Schieffer, president and chief executive officer of the DM&E railroad, is overseeing a construc-

tion project refurbishing a large portion of the track across the Upper Midwest.

The first stage will install 100 miles of new continuous welded rail.

Next up is 182,000 new railroad ties, 800 pass miles of resurfacing, repairs on 146 bridges and four new sidings, one near Manchester and three in Minnesota.

"It certainly needs to be done," Schieffer said. "It certainly goes beyond maintenance. It is part of a project we've been needing to do

for a long time."

The construction, with an estimated cost of "well over \$50 million," is independent of the DM&E's planned \$2-billion project.

That calls for upgrades from Wyoming's Powder River Basin to the Mississippi River.

But the smaller project is built to the same standards.

Once a rail is set in place, it's heated, then anchored down once it's at its widest, Schieffer said the

heat can start small tie fires, which account for much of the smoke seen by area residents.

Heavier 136-pound rail is replacing 90- or 100-pound sections in some areas. But more importantly, workers are taking up some pieces of steel that have been around for 60 to 80 years, Schieffer said.

"It has a lot of imperfections and defects in it," he said. "That's where you get your derailments from."