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**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION VIII**

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**Subject:** Loveland I-25 Diesel Spill Site Update #1  
Loveland, CO, 40.3837875, -104.9935375

**On-Scene Coordinator:** Valeriy Bizyayev, [Bizyayev.Valeriy@epa.gov](mailto:Bizyayev.Valeriy@epa.gov)  
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**Date:** 3/23/2021  
**Reporting Period:** March 20 to March 22, 2021

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UAS aerial photo of the incident.  
(Source: Colorado State Patrol).



Asphalt operations on I-25 Northbound  
looking northeast.



Earthen berm and underflow dam in the  
ditch that runs west of I-25.

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**Site Description**

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At approximately 0100 on March 20, 2021, a tanker truck carrying 11,500 gallons of diesel fuel was involved in a rollover accident on I-25 (near Mile Marker 255) in Loveland, Larimer County, Colorado. The tanker lost the entirety of its load, plus the contents of its two saddle tanks (250 gallons each). This section of I-25 is currently under construction, and the tanker ended upside down, straddling the divide between the north bound lanes of I-25, and a center construction area. Diesel fuel soaked into the asphalt, as well as draining into storm drains on both the east and west side of the highway. The spilled fuel traveled north from these drains into an irrigation ditch on the west side of I-25 that flows into the Big Thompson River, roughly 3/8 of a mile north of the accident scene.

**Location**

The discharge location occurred on I-25 just north of its intersection with Highway 402/34 near mile marker 255. The impacted area included both North and South bound lanes of I-25, as well as a construction area between the two. The spill is located in Loveland, Larimer County, Colorado. There are residential neighborhoods 1,000 feet east of the incident location. To the west of the interstate is a

private residential property, which includes a large (approximately 15 acres in area) pond. Adjacent to the north of the residential property is a State Wildlife Area which lies along the Big Thompson River. The area is also home to a system of drainage and irrigation ditches that travel both north to the Big Thompson River, and east to agricultural lands in Larimer County. Larimer County has estimated population of 356,899 (census.gov).

### **Description of Threat**

A total of just under 12,000 gallons of diesel fuel was involved in this discharge, Per 40 CFR 300.5, the NCP defines this discharge as a major one (>10,000 gallons). The proximity of the impacted drainage pathways leading directly to the nearby Big Thompson River posed a serious threat of the diesel fuel reaching the River.

The Big Thompson River is a tributary to the South Platte River, which serves as a source of both drinking and irrigation and brings recreational and economic value to the State of Colorado. Diesel fuel constituents can attach to particles in the soil or water and, in water, may sink down into the sediment. Chemicals that attach to soil or other matter (e.g., marsh sediment) may remain in the environment for more than a decade.

The close proximity to the residential neighborhoods prompted the need for community air monitoring. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, diesel fuel is a highly flammable liquid with a high vapor pressure and poses a high fire hazard if not contained and removed. Diesel fuel may evaporate into the air when spilled onto soils or surface waters in an open environment.

Diesel fuel can enter the human body when breathed in through the air, when ingested in food containing diesel, and when skin comes into contact with it. Breathing diesel fuel vapors for a long time may damage the kidneys, increase blood pressure, or lower the blood's ability to clot. Constant skin contact (for example, washing) with diesel fuel may also damage the kidneys. Hence, there was concern that the discharge may have posed a threat to public health in the nearby neighborhoods.

### **Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results**

Due to the presence of a major discharge and its threat to the Big Thompson River and the nearby community, EPA OSC Bizyayev immediately recognized the need for federal assistance and coordination with local response authorities.

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### **Response Actions to Date**

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At approximately 0115 MDT on March 20, 2021, a tanker truck owned by Akal Energy LLC carrying diesel fuel overturned on I-25 (near Mile Marker 255) in Loveland, Larimer County, Colorado. Notification of this incident was forwarded to EPA Region 8 at approximately 0230 MST on March 20, 2021. The accident resulted in a fire and minor injury to the tanker driver. Initial reports indicated that up to 11,500 gallons of diesel fuel had been lost to the roadway and drainage ditches, and the topography of the incident location leads all drainage to the Big Thompson River. The Colorado State Patrol and the Loveland Fire Rescue Authority responded to conduct response operations.

OSC Valeriy Bizyayev was dispatched to the scene at 0700 MDT on March 20, 2021. Upon arriving on scene and conducting a preliminary assessment, EPA OSC Bizyayev entered into Unified Command with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Colorado State Patrol (CSP) and Loveland Fire Rescue Authority (LFRA). CDOT hired an environmental clean-up contractor to immediately start diesel recovery

efforts on the interstate. LFRA conducted fire suppression, life safety operations, and constructed underflow dams to keep oil out of the River. CSP controlled traffic and helped prioritize state/local resources. EPA, in consultation with Unified Command, secured additional contractor resources to accelerate oil recovery efforts.

EPA ERRS contractors arrive on-scene on the morning of March 20, 2021. They immediately began assisting the effort to remove recoverable diesel fuel from the drainage ditches and improving the functionality of the control points (underflow dams, check dams, and boom locations) installed by the LFRA and CSP. The ERRS crew also modified site drainage so that all water (and hence all draining diesel) flowed to the control points along the drainage ditches on the west side of I-25. Fuel recovery operations continued overnight on March 20 and into March 21. During this period, CDOT contractors continued to remove free product from in and around the roadway as well as removing impacted soil and asphalt from the spill area.

In addition to EPA actions to accelerate oil recovery efforts, EPA conducted community air monitoring (CAM) to assess and protect the residential communities close to the incident location. Air monitoring in the communities was conducted on March 20 and March 21, 2021 with no detections over community action levels.

EPA also conducted visual inspections and collected water samples to help determine if diesel fuel had reached the Big Thompson River. No fuel or sheen was observed on the Big Thompson River, and laboratory data received on March 22, 2021 confirmed diesel range organics and gasoline range organics were below the reporting limit or non-detect.

On March 21, 2021 the interstate had been closed for over 24 hours. CDOT in consultation with EPA and other Unified Command members decided to reopen the interstate as quickly as possible. EPA expressed the concern that the interstate was not fully remediated and there could be potential impacts associated with opening the interstate. However, EPA recognized that there were other, non-environmental public health and safety aspects associated with the interstate closure and deferred the final decision on when to reopen I-25 to the State Agencies. At this time, CDOT focused resources on preparing the interstate for safe passage and the EPA focused on continual mitigation efforts to recover oil and prevent impacts the Big Thompson River. The interstate was reopened roughly 36 hours after the time of the accident.

A heavy storm, bringing significant rain and snow, began in the area on the afternoon of March 21, 2021. With the approval of Unified Command, EPA completed the redirection of drainage to central collection points along the western drainage (see Site Map) and consolidated the footprint of oil recovery operations. EPA also re-enforced the underflow dams, booming locations and collection points. The heavy winter weather arrived and made night operations unsafe. All crews under Unified Command demobilized from the Site by 1730 on March 21, 2021. At that time there was no observable "free product" in or around the spill scene, and the control points were thought robust enough to stop any spread of diesel overnight.

EPA arrived back on site at 0730 on March 22, 2021 to evaluate the effectiveness of the containment measures that had been left in place. These measures proved successful and no diesel made it into the river during the winter storm. It was at this time that EPA began to transition oil recovery efforts back to CDOT's clean up contractor. It is now the understanding of EPA that CDOT had transitioned financial

responsibility for their Response Contractor to the RPs insurance provider.

EPA demobilized all contractor staff from the Site on the afternoon of March 22, 2021. OSC Bizyayev will continue to provide oversight of the oil recovery and mitigation efforts by the RP for the next few weeks.

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### Progress Metrics

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Waste Stream	Medium	Quantity
Recovered Oil	Oil	5,000 Gallons
Removed Oil/Water	Water	120,000 Gallons

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### Planned Response Activities

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EPA will continue to monitor the situation and make assets available to local response agencies if needed to include continued oversight of the RP's clean up contractor until oil recovery and mitigation is complete. It is anticipated that EPA's involvement will cease in the next few weeks.

### Next Steps

Once EPA's involvement ends in the next few weeks, Colorado State Patrol, as the state Designated Emergency Response Authority, will continue oversight of clean-up efforts. However, EPA will continue to provide technical support and assets as requested.

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### Participating Entities

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#### Unified Command (Informal)

- US EPA Region 8
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Colorado State Patrol (CSP)

#### Other Assisting Agencies

- Larimer County Department of Health and Environment
  - Colorado Parks and Wildlife
  - Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
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### Additional sources of information

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[response.epa.gov/LovelandI25DieselSpill](https://response.epa.gov/LovelandI25DieselSpill)

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/aca32c1fb3f7451bab5dbd9ebfcff4b4>