

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
Silvertip Pipeline Spill - Yellowstone River - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region VIII

Subject: POLREP #2
Assessment and Initial Recovery Actions
Silvertip Pipeline Spill - Yellowstone River
Laurel, MT
Latitude: 45.6691159 Longitude: -108.7715328

To:
From: Steven Merritt, On-Scene Coordinator
Date: 7/8/2011
Reporting Period: 7/3/2011 - 7/7/2011

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:		Contract Number:	
D.O. Number:		Action Memo Date:	
Response Authority:	OPA	Response Type:	Emergency
Response Lead:	PRP	Incident Category:	Removal Action
NPL Status:	NPL	Operable Unit:	
Mobilization Date:	7/2/2011	Start Date:	7/3/2011
Demob Date:		Completion Date:	
CERCLIS ID:		RCRIS ID:	
ERNS No.:		State Notification:	
FPN#:	E11809	Reimbursable Account #:	

1.1.1 Incident Category

This is an emergency response under OPA/CWA Removal Action authority. The pipeline spill incident has been classified as a "Major Discharge" to inland waters as by the NCP.

1.1.2 Site Description

A 12 inch crude oil pipeline breached in the vicinity of or under the Yellowstone River releasing an estimated 750 to 1,000 barrels (31,500 to 42,000 gallons) of crude oil into the river. The incident reportedly occurred at approximately 2330 on July 1, 2011 based upon low-pressure SCADA alarms at a nearby pump station within the ExxonMobil Silvertip Pipeline System. The 14 mile section of pipeline between adjacent pump stations, which crosses beneath the flooded Yellowstone River where the breach is suspected to have occurred, likely filled with river water, displacing a significant amount of oil that floated to the surface. The river is in flood stage at this time, which poses significant safety risks for responders and precludes efforts at containment booming.

1.1.2.1 Location

The incident occurred in Laurel, Montana on the Yellowstone River approximately 15 miles west of Billings. Oil appears to have moderately impacted 20 miles of river shorelines, floodplains, and riparian areas. There are lightly impacted areas of shoreline, traces of emulsified oil, and soiled vegetation beyond this point and diminishing in frequency and severity to Pompey's Pillar, MT, at about 45 river miles from the spill site. Beyond Pompey's Pillar, there have only been are only a few small sightings of pockets of emulsified oil.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The potential threats posed to human health and the environment from this discharge of crude oil, which is a mixture of various petroleum hydrocarbons along with trace amounts of metals and hydrogen sulfide, include respiratory estimated at approximately 1000 barrels (42,000 gallons) of crude oil. The river is at flood stage and is carrying oil into overland flow and down river. Threatened and endangered species and migratory water fowl are present, but to date, there have been only 6 birds reported with observed impacts, none of which have been recovered. Drinking water intakes have been sampled and preliminary indications are that the water meets .

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Aerial reconnaissance and limited ground surveillance has been conducted from the site of the pipeline

break to Glendive, MT, approximately 240 miles downstream. These assessments indicate that oil from the spill has migrated downstream to the furthest visible extent (stained vegetation or pockets of emulsified oil) of approximately 50 miles from the pipeline break. At this time, the oil impacts have not been fully assessed; slower water areas are accumulating oil on vegetation and a significant amount of debris accumulated in the river. Many of these debris piles immediately downstream of the spill site are releasing oil back into the river when there are fluctuations in river stage. Wildlife impacts are being observed; however, limited information is currently available to determine the extent of impacts. Shoreline assessment is not complete. Downstream counties are providing limited information about impacts.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Montana Department Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have been providing input to the OSC on the impacts to natural resources and trust lands.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

Response activities are being conducted in earnest in the field to effect free product recovery and employ absorbent materials to collect sheen. The RP has mobilized hundreds of clean-up contractors to the impacted areas between Laurel and Billings, while maintaining a reserve strike force to address any pockets of oil that are found anywhere along the river by aerial reconnaissance, ground surveillance, and reports from the public and local officials. Access to the river is limited in many areas and the RP is working to obtain consent from private landowners to support a more comprehensive clean up effort. However, conditions on the river including high velocity flow, flood stage water levels, and large debris (trees and logs) floating in the current dictate that conservative measures be used at this time. Limited use of smaller boats near shorelines, in backwaters and side channels, to recover oil and employ sorbent materials

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

As of July 8, 2011, only a small fraction of the estimated 1000 barrels of oil has been recovered by vacuum trucks or absorbent materials. Assessments of the river indicate that the flooded river has washed away a significant fraction of that oil, with only limited amounts pooled in the floodplain or riparian wetland areas and substantial amounts of soiled vegetation and upland tracts along the river. A sample of the crude oil was collected from the pipeline, which may possibly be in sediments or submerged oil along the river,

DIVISION A - Laurel, MT (US-212 Bridge) to Duck Creek (River RD & Duck Creek RD) - 8 River Miles

DIVISION B - Duck Creek (River RD & Duck Creek RD) to Billings, MT (US-87 Bridge) - 12 River Miles

DIVISION C - Billings, MT (US-87 Bridge) to Miles City, MT (MT-59 Bridge) - 142 River Miles

An aerial assessment was made on

DIVISION D - Miles City, MT (MT-59 Bridge) to Glendive, MT (I-94 Business Route Bridge) - 78 River Miles

The RP has stopped the source of the discharge by shutting down the pipeline at the nearest valve (reportedly, approximately 0.5 miles from the river on one side).

Evacuations were initiated by the Billings Fire Department for a period of several hours in the early morning and residents were allowed to return to their homes by approximately 0500.

Water supply intakes were shutdown through Billings and downstream notifications were made.

Approximately 20 personnel from the pipeline company and refinery are on scene performing minor containment and collection with sorbent boom and pads.

Response contractors (Clean Harbors) have been mobilized and are reportedly expected on scene by 1600 hours on July 3.

2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

ExxonMobil Corporation is believed to be the Responsible Party (RP). Based on the OSCs (Romero) evaluation of the response actions, EPA has mobilized the ERRS contractor to provide additional response contractor resources need to be on scene sooner than what Exxon is providing for.

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

To be determined

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

START personnel will assess shoreline areas for oil accumulation and providing status updates on response operations.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Oil recovery operations will continue in areas where oil is accumulating and access is safely obtained for cleanup crews. Additional crews will be available on Sunday, July 3 and July 4.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Shoreline assessment is needed to determine effective strategies for recovering the oil. Sorbent boom deployment will be expanded in the morning, and where possible, other oil recovery and containment will be implemented.

Monitoring the downstream extent of the impact is planned for the morning.

2.2.2 Issues

Effective response has been slow to develop from the RP and detailed response resource information has not been provided to the FOSC.

The July 4th Holiday weekend has slowed overall resource deployment to the incident. However, mobilization has started and substantial increase in personnel is expected July 3.

2.3 Logistics Section

EPA Logistics functions have been performed by the on-call OSC during the mobilization. This function will be performed on site under Unified Command.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

No report

2.6 Liaison Officer

No Report

2.7 Information Officer

2.7.1 Public Information Officer

Media contact has been made and the Phone Duty OSC provided an interview while EPA resources mobilized.

2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator

Need to be determined

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

Unified Command is being established with EPA, Exxon Mobil and the State

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

State and local agency participation is being developed.

4. Personnel On Site

Federal Resources:

EPA: Three On-Scene Coordinators are mobilizing to the scene to oversee operations in support of the FOSC.

USCG: Pacific Strike Team members (4) have mobilized and will be in Billings July 2 and on scene July 3.

EPA ERRS Contractor: approximately 50 personnel and river boats are being mobilized by EPA thru the ERRS contract.

EPA START Contractor: 2 START members are onscene and at least 2 more are deploying July 3.

EPA ERT: 1 ERT member will be mobilized July 3 and provide environmental assessment support.

State Resources:

ExxonMobil Resources:

20 clean up personnel onscene

100 to 150 clean up crew reporting July3 and July 4.

5. Definition of Terms

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency
FOSC or OSC - Federal On-Scene Coordinator
START - Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team Contractor
ERRS - Emergency and Rapid Response Services Contractor
ERT - Environmental Response Team
PRP - Potentially Responsible Party
EM - ExxonMobil Corporation

6. Additional sources of information

6.1 Internet location of additional information/report
Billings Gazette (billingsgazette.com)

6.2 Reporting Schedule
Every 48 Hours

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.

POLREP #2 Last Updated 10/27/2011