

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
Westlake Chemical Fire - Removal Polrep
Final Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region VI

Subject: POLREP #2
Final
Westlake Chemical Fire
Geismar, LA
Latitude: 30.2247645 Longitude: -91.0012756

To: Lawrence Stanton, EPA HQ
Peter Ricca, LDEQ
Ragan Broyles, Superfund Division

From: William Rhotenberry, OSC

Date: 5/29/2012

Reporting Period: 3/23/2012 to 3/28/2012

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:	Contract Number:
D.O. Number:	Action Memo Date:
Response Authority: CERCLA	Response Type: Emergency
Response Lead: EPA	Incident Category: Removal Assessment
NPL Status: Non NPL	Operable Unit:
Mobilization Date: 3/22/2012	Start Date: 3/22/2012
Demob Date: 3/23/2012	Completion Date: 3/25/2012
CERCLIS ID:	RCRIS ID:
ERNS No.:	State Notification:
FPN#:	Reimbursable Account #:

1.1.1 Incident Category

At 1001 hours on 22 March 2012, the National Response Center (NRC) received a report from the Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office of an explosion and fire at the Westlake Chemical facility located at 36045 Highway 30 in Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana. The incident was assigned NRC Report# 1006517. An unknown amount of Chlorine, Hydrogen Chloride and Vinyl Chloride were released as a result of the explosion and fire. The cause of the explosion is unknown at this time.

1.1.2 Site Description

Westlake Chemical facility is a vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) and ethylene dichloride (EDC) refinery located within an industrial/commercial area of Ascension Parish. An explosion occurred within a VCM distillation tower which resulted in a release of chlorine, hydrogen chloride, VCM and EDC. Fire monitor cannons were used to extinguish the fire.

1.1.2.1 Location

The incident occurred at the Westlake Chemical facility located at 36045 Highway 30 in Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana. The facility is bordered by industrial facilities to the south and east; commercial business to the north and farm land to the west.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The fire has been extinguished. VCM drier tanks and a chlorine vaporizer tank located near the VCM tower where the fire occurred, are considered to be the primary threats at this time. Facility personnel are making plans to move the chemicals so that the VCM tower can be worked on safely. LDEQ has conducted chlorine and acid gas air monitoring at the incident location as well as along the perimeter of the facility. All air monitoring results have been reported as non-detect.

1.1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

OSC Rhotenberry and START-3 contractors responded to the incident and met with Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), Louisiana State Police, Gonzales Fire Department, Acension Parish

Sheriff's Office, Ascension Parish Office of Homeland Security and Westlake Chemical representatives. LSP stated that Westlake personnel had conducted initial air monitoring for chlorine gas near the incident location and no results above background were reported. Water cannons were set up near the incident area and continue to spray water over the area as a precaution. EPA Region 6 mobilized the ASPECT plane to overfly the facility and conduct chemical monitoring. No chemical detections were reported.

LDEQ mobilized their Mobile Air Monitoring Lab (MAML) to the facility and began air monitoring for VOCs, including Vinyl Chloride and EDC. No results above background were reported. LDEQ personnel began perimeter air monitoring with chlorine and acid gas Porta Sens Monitors. Westlake Chemical contracted the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (CTEH) to conduct continuous air monitoring at various locations within the facility.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

During the reporting period for Polrep No. 1, Westlake Chemical and Louisiana State Police representatives made entries to the unit where the fire/explosion occurred. Three VCM Drier Tanks were identified north of the VCM distillation tower that contain approximately 3,000 gallons of VCM. A Chlorine Vaporizer Tank was also observed west of the VCM Tower that contains Chlorine. Due to the close proximity, response activities were focused on removing the VCM material from the drier tanks and the Chlorine from the vaporizer tank in order to be able to address the VCM Tower safely. CTEH also began air monitoring activities within the facility and around the perimeter.

During this reporting period, Westlake facility personnel transferred the remaining VCM material within the Drier Tanks and the chlorine material within the Vaporizer Tank into their respective holding tanks. It is estimated that a total of 3,000 gallons of VCM were removed from the Drier Tanks and 340 pounds of chlorine were removed from the Vaporizer Tank. After VCM and chlorine transfer operations were completed, LSP, EPA and Westlake representatives finalized a work plan for securing the damaged VCM column and removing the remaining EDC.

EPA and START-3 personnel demobilized from the site on 23 March, 2012. The LSP remained on-site to coordinate response activities. LDEQ and CTEH remained on-site to provide air monitoring support. LDEQ reported that the damaged VCM column was secured by work cranes, and the remaining EDC material was removed on 25 March, 2012. Westlake Chemical submitted an Unauthorized Discharge Notification Report to LDEQ on 28 March 2012. The notification report stated that 632 pounds of chlorine and 239 pounds of vinyl chloride were released into the atmosphere as a result of the initial explosion and subsequent fire.

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

Westlake Chemical at 36045 Highway 30 in Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana is listed as the responsible party.

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

<i>Waste Stream</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Manifest #</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Disposal</i>

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

Westlake personnel will begin repairing equipment in order for the facility to resume normal operations.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

No additional response activities are planned.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

2.2.2 Issues

2.3 Logistics Section

No information available at this time.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

No information available at this time.

3. Participating Entities

No information available at this time.

4. Personnel On Site

No information available at this time.

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.

POLREP #2 Last Updated 6/17/2013