

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Region VI  
POLLUTION REPORT**

**Date:** Thursday, February 24, 2005

**From:** Charles Fisher

**Subject:** Brownsville Tire Fire  
Brownsville Tire Site  
6630 Farm Road 1732 between Highway 77, Brownsville, TX  
Latitude: 26.0208100  
Longitude: -97.5739700

<b>POLREP No.:</b>	1	<b>Site #:</b>	YQ
<b>Reporting Period:</b>		<b>D.O. #:</b>	
<b>Start Date:</b>	2/22/2005	<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA
<b>Mob Date:</b>	2/22/2005	<b>Response Type:</b>	Emergency
<b>Demob Date:</b>	2/24/2005	<b>NPL Status:</b>	
<b>Completion Date:</b>	2/24/2005	<b>Incident Category:</b>	Removal Action
<b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>		<b>Contract #</b>	
<b>RCRIS ID #:</b>			

#### **Site Description**

On 22 February 2005, the Brownsville Fire Department (BFD) notified the EPA Region 6 Response and Prevention Branch (EPA-RPB) and the National Response Center (NRC No.750709) of a approximate 1,500 tire fire in Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas. The tire fire occurred at an abandoned/inactive tire recycling facility located on Farm Road 1732, between Highway 77 and Highway 281, in a suburb called Olmito.

According to the BFD, the fire began at approximately 0130 hours on 21 February, while the adjacent land owner was burning their garbage. The site consists of shredded tires for fuel recovery. At the time of the fire, there were various piles of shredded tires encompassing approximately 5 acres of land, and no owner/operator could be located.

#### **Current Activities**

On 22 February 2005, EPA mobilized two START 2 contractors to investigate the tire fire, to conduct air monitoring for fire combustion products and assist state and local resources. The local fire department used a combination of water and foam to suppress the smoke plume and to extinguish/contain the fire. TCEQ representatives were on-site to coordinate with the fire departments and to provide regulatory guidance. At approximately 1230 hours, TCEQ collected a 30-minute Summa canister air sample, at a location northwest of the site near a residence.

START-2 conducted air monitoring in the smoke plume and at nine downwind locations, in both rural and residential areas. START-2 used Toxic Vapor Analyzer (TVA) to monitor for the presence of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and colorimetric tubes to test for benzene, toluene, xylene, and petroleum hydrocarbons. In addition, Toxi-Rae analyzers were used to test for chlorine, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide, ammonia, hydrogen cyanide, and nitrogen oxide. Based on the results of perimeter air monitoring, it was concluded that no contaminants were detectable.

On 23 February 2005, the BFD used heavy equipment to dismantle the various piles of burning shredded tires while crews applied water to suppress the fire and smoke. The dismantled material was bulldozed into several on-site fire suppression ponds. During early afternoon OSC Fisher arrived on-site to assess the situation and consult with the BFD and TCEQ representatives. The fire was extinguished at approximately 1630 hours.

Runoff from the site was contained in on-site fire suppression ponds and in drainage ditches. START 2 used spill fighter strips to test the contained run off water in three locations. The results indicated that low levels of petroleum hydrocarbons were present in the runoff and that the pH was 7. One of the drainage ditches sampled contained water that had flowed offsite before a barrier berm had been constructed. The amount of water in this part of the drainage ditch was nominal.

#### **Next Steps**

The future plans for this site are undetermined at this time. The remaining tires/debris and potentially contaminated water and soils will need to be assessed and potentially removed.

**Key Issues**

The TCEQ is the lead agency responsible for this site. Discussions between the city, county and state agencies are needed to determine the funding for final site cleanup, since a viable responsible party may not be located.

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