

Date: Dec 27, 2006 1200 PST

To: NOAA SSC Charlie Henry

SUBJECT: Fate of Oil from Planes Pipeline, Offshore Texas

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT Doug Helton
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This analysis is based on the following information:

USCG notified the NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC) of a reported 1000 bbl¹ spill of a light crude oil spill offshore of SE Texas. The location is roughly 30 miles SE of Galveston, TX. The spill was the result of a pipeline failure discovered at 0640 hrs local time on December 24. A 6 mile long brownish slick was observed. The sea state was very rough: waves between 8 and 12 feet were reported with winds in excess of 18 knots. The pipeline was immediately shut in, but continues to leak approximately 500 gallons a day. A dive ship is presently on-scene (12/27 AM) and the USCG expects that the residual leakage will be secured shortly. NWS forecasts for the region indicate winds increasing to 20-25 knots and seas remaining at 8-10 feet through the week. Onshore winds are forecasted through Friday and then the winds are predicted to shift offshore. If any of this information is incorrect, please let us know ASAP as it would affect any fate implications.

The USCG requests a general discussion of the fate and weathering of the light crude oil. The rough seas and winds are expected to rapidly break the slick up into a wide area of scattered tarballs². Because of their size and scattered distribution, these tarballs may be difficult to see and track from the air or deck of a vessel, but may accumulate in convergence zones with other flotsam, or along shorelines. With the forecast calling for S winds starting today and continuing into Friday evening, there is a possibility of oil coming ashore between Galveston Island and the Western Louisiana shoreline by Friday afternoon. The possibility of this happening depends upon the strength and persistence of the onshore winds later in the week. There is a possibility that the oil will not landfall because it is either too far out to sea to come ashore before the winds shift, or because not enough oil persists under the high wave conditions to make a noticeable beach impact.

The NOAA Adios2 Oil Weathering model³ was run for a Texas Shelf Light Crude oil. The model indicates that about 50% of the released oil will evaporate and disperse within less than two days of the release. After this point, the remaining oil will be relatively stable, breaking up into tarballs. There is some chance that an emulsion could have formed in the first few hours after the release. In any case, after a few days, the oil will most likely be in the form of widely scattered tarballs.

¹ Initial reported as a 500 bbl spill

² See attached one-pager on tarballs.

³ See attached model run