Barge Cut in Half Overnight in New Orleans

Last night a tanker and barge collided near downtown New Orleans, LA, resulting in a spill of 9,000 barrels (380,000 gallons) of #6 fuel oil. For reference, the recent Cosco Busan spill involved about 53,000 gallons of similar fuel oil spilling into San Francisco Bay. The incident occurred at approximately 0200 local time. The barge was reported "ripped in half," discharging its entire contents. Information on the vessels involved is preliminary, but from NRC and USCG reports the vessels appear to be the motor vessel "Tintomara", the Tug "Mel Oliver" and the barge "DM932". The tanker, loaded with styrene and biodiesel, is reportedly not leaking.

NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC) Charlie Henry (Office of Response and Restoration) was notified by the US Coast Guard (USCG) and is en route to the Command Center from Baton Rouge. The SSC will provide scientific support to the USCG Federal On-Scene Coordinator. In situations like this, NOAA promotes better decision making by predicting the trajectory of spilled oil, identifying sensitive natural resources, observing the location of oil from helicopters, and providing a range of other scientific services.

The following verbal trajectory was produced by the Office of Response and Restoration Home Team, called in overnight in Seattle:

> With the light to moderate winds we expect significant amounts of oil to move downstream over the next few days. With the winds expected from the S to SE today most of the shoreline impacts on the river should be on the South facing shoreline.
>
> Here are the estimated arrival times of the leading edge of the slick:
>
> 0140 CDT : accident site mile, marker 96
> 0800 CDT: Belle Chase ,mile marker 78
> 1200 CDT: Fanny, mile marker 67
> 1600 CDT: Poverty Point, mile marker 60
> 2000 CDT: Woodland, mile marker 50
>
> Thursday:
> 0600 CDT: Tropical Bend, mile marker 30
> 2000 CDT: Head of Passes

An informative news video can be seen at this link:
http://www.wwltv.com/local/stories/wwl072308cbtanker.8243ab1f.html#

More information will be available after the first overflight is conducted this morning. Anyone with a NOAA email account can log on to NOAA ResponseLINK for more complete and updated information.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Bill Conner