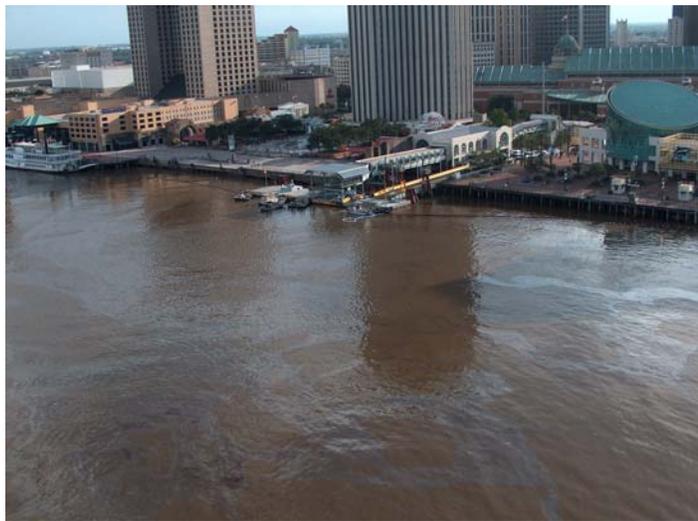


Tanker and Barge Collision in New Orleans, LA Update July 25, 1000 EDT

Situation Updates

- Afternoon aerial reconnaissance yesterday showed oil past the Head of Passes and into the delta region. The bulk of the oil remains upstream and the amount that has reached the delta is small. Three additional helicopter surveys are planned for today.
- Some oil has entered marsh areas through breaks in the river bank. Oyster leases in these areas may become contaminated.
- By yesterday afternoon over 13 miles of boom had been deployed. This is 10 times the amount deployed on day one. However, to put this in perspective, there are more than 200 miles of river bank in the affected area.
- Salvage planning is beginning and divers inspected the barge today. The salvage will likely be in several stages, beginning with removing the residual oil, then by moving the sections out of the channel, then removal.
- Shoreline assessment work is beginning. High priority areas for initial cleanup include the river walk in New Orleans, Chalmette Battlefield (part of the Jean Lafitte National Park), and other high use areas. Reports of oiled wildlife have been limited but may increase as more teams are deployed in the field.
- Impacts to potable water supplies remain a major concern. Some municipal water supplies are shut down entirely, some are open, and some are operating under limited capacity. Despite booming some intakes have been contaminated and more rigorous protection strategies are being developed.
- The EPA is working to expedite testing of the water supply.



Overflight Photo 24JUL08 of downtown Riverwalk area. Although the oil has spread over 100 miles downriver, large amounts of floating and stranded black oil are still present near the initial spill site. Odors from this oil have generated public complaints and cleanup of this area will be a high priority. Photo credit Mary Barber, NOAA SSC Assistant.

- Air quality is also an issue as the high-sulfur oil is creating foul fumes, raising concerns in the nearby neighborhoods.
- Additional NOAA support staff have arrived to assist with conducting shoreline surveys, provide information management support, and assess biological impacts. This makes a total of 10 ORR staff on site.
- The river remains closed to marine traffic and may remain closed for several days. As of yesterday afternoon 58 ships were trapped in the closure zone, 37 were blocked on the ICW, and 48 pending arrivals are affected, including at least one cruise ship. 203 facilities are potentially facing disruption because of the inability to ship or receive products.
- There is significant economic pressure to open the river to commerce, balanced by safety issues while the wreck is still in the channel and potential for disruption of oil booms from ship wakes. In particular there is concern that booms protecting water intakes may be disturbed and wakes may remobilize contained and stranded oil.
- The closure of the river may have national economic consequences. Several refineries may shut down or reduce operations over the weekend if feedstock oil cannot be supplied. The economic pressures are compounded by weather-related shutdowns in the Gulf region from Hurricane Dolly.
- The U.S. Coast Guard is working to prioritize vessel movements once the river is reopened to minimize economic disruption.
- The NOAA Natural Resource Damage Assessment Team is working to document the injuries to natural resources and disruptions of recreational activities.
- NOS Public Affairs prepared a press release on the incident, linked to the NOAA Homepage (<http://www.noaa.gov/>)
- Public information on the incident can be found at the NOAA Watch Website (<http://www.noaawatch.gov/>), the NOAA Incident News web site (<http://www.incidentnews.gov/incident/7861>).

OR&R Products and Services Yesterday:

On-Scene Support to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator: The NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator continues to support the USCG and the Unified Command on a range of technical and scientific issues relating to the assessment and cleanup of the spill.

Updated trajectory of the Spill: The NOAA Scientific Support Team (SST) in Seattle issued a revised forecast of the oil spill movements in the lower Mississippi River.

Information Management: The NOAA SST continued to maintain situational awareness information on incident including maintenance of ResponseLINK and IncidentNews, and working with NOAA Public and Legislative Affairs to address specific media and Congressional inquiries.

Weather and River Flows: The NOAA SST provided updated weather and river stage forecasts to the Unified Command.



Overflight Photo of clean up crews at Live Oaks downriver from New Orleans. The vegetated wetland area on the river side of the levy is referred to as the batture. Cleanup in these areas can be complicated by the large amount of woody debris. Photo Credit Mary Barber, NOAA SSC Assistant.

Aerial and Shoreline Assessment: The Team continues to participate in a systematic aerial and shoreline photo-documentation of the spill. Base maps and other materials have been developed to facilitate this assessment.

Long-term Fate of the Spilled Oil: The NOAA SST prepared an analysis of the fate of the oil that leaves the river and enters the Gulf of Mexico.

Draft Plan for Use of Volunteers: The NOAA SSC for the Cosco Busan spill last fall is on-scene in New Orleans and took the lead for a volunteer plan, including training and eligibility requirements

Natural Resource Damage Assessment: The NOAA Regional Response Coordinator (RRC) has collected a variety of environmental samples including water grab samples and oil samples from the field to document environmental conditions both in support of the response and to inform future decisions about potential risk to resources from this discharged oil as part of the ongoing Natural Resource Damage Assessment. These field collected samples will be used for fingerprinting oil to confirm its source, potential toxicity, and to track expected weathering patterns.

Background on Incident

Early Wednesday morning (7/23/08) a 600-foot chemical tanker and 200-foot fuel barge collided near downtown New Orleans, LA. The collision tore the barge "DM932" in half, discharging an estimated 419,000 gallons of #6 fuel oil, viscous tar-like oil. The barge had just loaded the oil at Stone Oil Co. in Gretna, across the river from the accident site, and was on its way to Memphis. The double-hulled tanker "Tintomara," loaded with styrene and biodiesel and outbound for Europe, had only minor damage and did not spill any material. Oil from the barge is now spread over a hundred miles of the lower Mississippi River and a major cleanup operation is underway. NOAA is providing technical support to the Unified Command and is working with the local resource agencies to conduct a preliminary natural resource damage assessment. The accident is under investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board.