



## Tanker and Barge Collision in New Orleans, LA Update July 28, 1000 EDT

### Updates

- The river has reopened to navigation but vessel movements are limited and highly coordinated. Four decontamination stations have been established. Vessels must be inspected and cleaned before leaving the spill zone.
- The barge is still adjacent to the Crescent City Connection Bridge in New Orleans and continues to leak small amounts of oil. Salvage efforts are focusing on stabilizing the barge to remove the residual oil. Once the pollution threat is removed, the barge wreckage will be removed from the river.
- NOAA continues to provide technical and scientific support to the Unified Command for the 420,000 gallons fuel oil spill on the Mississippi River that occurred last Wednesday. Eight NOAA ERD personnel remain on-scene providing a variety of duties for the Unified Command (see list below). Cleanup is expected to take several weeks and a rotational staffing plan is being developed.
- During the sustained deployment of NOAA staff to Louisiana, NOAA response to other spills may be sub-optimal due to capacity limitations. Deployment decisions will be made based on most significant mitigation of environmental threat.
- NOAA NWS is providing routine weather forecast and severe weather warnings to support the field operations.
- NOAA is fully integrated into the response effort and is taking the lead on the shoreline assessment effort, coordination among the resource management agencies, and scientific aspects of the cleanup.
- The majority of the spilled oil is stranded near the downtown piers and shorelines along a 50 mile section of the river below the City. Sheens and tar patties have been observed below the head of passes (See overflight map).
- As the oil weathers (chemically and physically degrades) and contacts the high sediment loading of the Mississippi River, some of the oil is now forming nonfloating oil fragments and small tarballs and is no longer visible on the surface.
- Shoreline cleanup is progressing, but there is much work to be done. Cleanup activity will likely continue for weeks. Cleanup safety will be balanced with reopening commercial traffic.
- 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>).



Oil continues to leak from barge against bridge. See oil skimmer in oil and ineffective booming. Current at 2-3kts. Afternoon overflight, 25July08. Photo by John Tarpley, NOAA.

### **OR&R Products and Services over the Weekend:**

**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.

**Cleanup Endpoints:** The NOAA Scientific Support Team (SST) helped to develop cleanup endpoints for the spill. The plan includes an initial standard for gross oil cleanup and higher standards for final cleanup of shorelines.

**Decontamination Plan for Vessels:** The NOAA team worked with the Unified Command's Vessel Decontamination Group to identify locations, techniques, and cleanup standards for oiled vessels. Four ship cleaning stations have been established- 2 for deep draft vessels and 2 for smaller craft. A surface washing agent was approved but at present, hot, moderately high-pressure washing is sufficient. No significant sheen or washed off product are being observed down river from these sites.

**Severe Weather Safety.** The SST worked with the NOAA weather service to provide emergency notification of severe weather in addition to the twice-daily weather reports. Severe thunderstorms are a hazard to cleanup crews and have caused delays in cleanup activities.

**Cruise Ship Plan:** The NOAA SST worked to develop a priority cleanup plan to allow the downtown cruise terminal to reopen. A 3000-passenger vessel is scheduled to arrive later this week.

**Drinking Water Intakes:** NOAA assisted with development of protection strategies for drinking water intakes downriver from the spill site. All drinking water intakes are now open.

**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.

**Aerial Assessment:** The Team continues to participate in a systematic aerial and shoreline photo-documentation of the spill, with two flights on Sunday.

**Shoreline Assessment:** NOAA is leading the Shoreline Assessment Process. Four multi-agency teams (three boat-based) and one shore-based) are in the field today. The overall objectives are to delineate and describe impacted shoreline types and oiling conditions to support Unified Command cleanup

**Draft plan for use of volunteers:** NOAA began drafting a Volunteer Coordination Plan at the request of Unified Command. This draft plan outlines the coordination and potential use of volunteers during the incident if the need arises and includes potential assignments, eligibility & training guidelines and training descriptions. The Volunteer Coordinator, once selected by the UC, will further refine this draft plan and move forward in coordinating with local/Parish-level volunteer management agencies/organizations to fill identified response needs.

**Endangered Species: Initial Section 7 discussions:** Preliminary ESA Section 7 discussions with USCG and USFWS regarding Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) have been conducted by NOAA acting as a representative of the USCG.

**Logistics and Media Coordination:** NOAA continues to work closely with the Joint Information Center (JIC), attending media briefings, meeting their requests (large photos for the press briefing, setting up ResponseLink accounts, and other activities. The NOS Ocean Media Center Team is on-scene to document activities .

**Information Management Support:** The NOAA team has been assisting with developing better situational unit products for the Unified Command and assisting in

documenting overflights by mapping the observations. These maps are key elements of situation briefings and planning activities.

**Natural Resource Damage Assessment:** The trustees and RP have started to evaluate trade-offs of performing simple or complex shoreline surveys for NRDA separate from response. Target implementation date for the surveys is late next week. An aquatic sampling plan is being developed.

### **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.

Overflight map from Sunday afternoon. Notes of oil observations are provided in text boxes, and the River Miles appear as points of reference. The spill occurred just north of the French Quarter near the River Mile 90 marker.

New Orleans DM932 Incident

Overflight Map  
 prepared by NOAA  
 USE ONLY AS A GENERAL REFERENCE

Date/Time: 27 July, 2008 1230-1500  
 Platform: USCG HH65 Helicopter  
 Observers: Travis, Weakley (USCG), McCall (USFWS)

Graphic does not represent precise amounts or locations of oil

