



## Tanker and Barge Collision in New Orleans, LA Update July 30, 1000 EDT – Draft.

### Updates:

- The river has reopened to navigation but vessel movements remain subject to a safety zone under a Captain-of-the-Port (COTP) order. The safety zone extends from River Mile 11 to River Mile 98 (just above New Orleans) Restrictions include speed and wake limits and vessel cleaning (if necessary) to prevent oil movement on vessels and oil remobilization from shorelines.
- Routine maintenance dredging operations near the Head of Passes have been shut down because of sunken oil. Two hopper barges of dredged sediments have been contaminated with small amounts of oil. The NOAA Scientific Support Team is working to develop options for resuming maintenance dredging and safe disposal of the contaminated sediments. Maintenance dredging is a 24-7 activity on the lower Mississippi River. The target depth for the federally-maintained channel is 45 feet, the current depth of the river at Head of Passes is 44 feet. In some places sediments accumulate up to 6 inches per day. A vessel-draft management plan has been imposed and larger vessels can only enter the river at high tide/water levels. Unless routine dredging can resume, the vessel draft restrictions will increase. Such restrictions could have additional impacts on river commerce, an industry hit hard this spring by high water by the mid-west floods, then shut down by the spill.
- All potable water intakes in the affected area are open.
- A salvage plan has been approved and salvage crews are working to stabilize the wrecked barge in order to remove the residual oil and rig the barge for lifting. The barge remains at River Mile 95.7 (Crescent City Connection Bridge)
- Four Shoreline Assessment Teams are deployed and documenting the severity of oil to support cleanup planning. Most of the heavy oil remains in a 50 mile zone below the City of New Orleans.
- The USCG reports that 38 miles of boom have been deployed. Over 1500 cleanup personnel are working on-scene. 72,000 gallons of an oil/water mix have been recovered.

## Recent OR&R Products and Services

- **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.
- **Severe Weather Warnings:** NWS Slidell continues to provide valuable forecasts and warnings to the Unified Command. Hazardous weather continues to be a concern for field crews.
- **Sampling Strategy for Contaminated Sediments:** NOAA is working with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Corps of Engineers to address the issue of sunken oil becoming entrained during dredging operations. Sampling will be difficult because of the depositional rates in the river.
- **Chemistry Support:** The OR&R Contract Laboratory at Louisiana State University analyzed the oil from the dredge barges and fingerprinted that contamination to the New Orleans Spill
- **Spill Simulation Video:** The NOAA Support Team in Seattle prepared a preliminary simulation of the progression of the spilled oil on the lower Mississippi River.  
<http://www.noaaneews.noaa.gov/stories2008/images/movieb.avi>
- **Information Management:** The NOAA SST continued to maintain situational awareness information on the incident, including working with NOAA Public and Legislative Affairs to address specific media and Congressional inquiries. The NOAA SSC continues to be quoted daily in the New Orleans media.
- **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.
- **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.



NOAA SCAT Team Leader briefs SCAT personnel during field calibration exercise for New Orleans DM932 response. NOAA/ERD photo.

- **Natural Resource Damage Assessment:** NOAA continues to coordinate with the State trustees, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Barge Owner's consultant. Areas of focus over the last two days include: 1) sampling of stranded oil to test whether oil on the river banks originated from DM932, 2) collection of ephemeral data on the use of affected riverfront areas, and 3) assessing the extent of oiling in the wildlife refuge that resulted from the inadvertent disposal of oil-contaminated sediments dredged from Head of Passes.

### **Background on Incident**

One week ago (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.