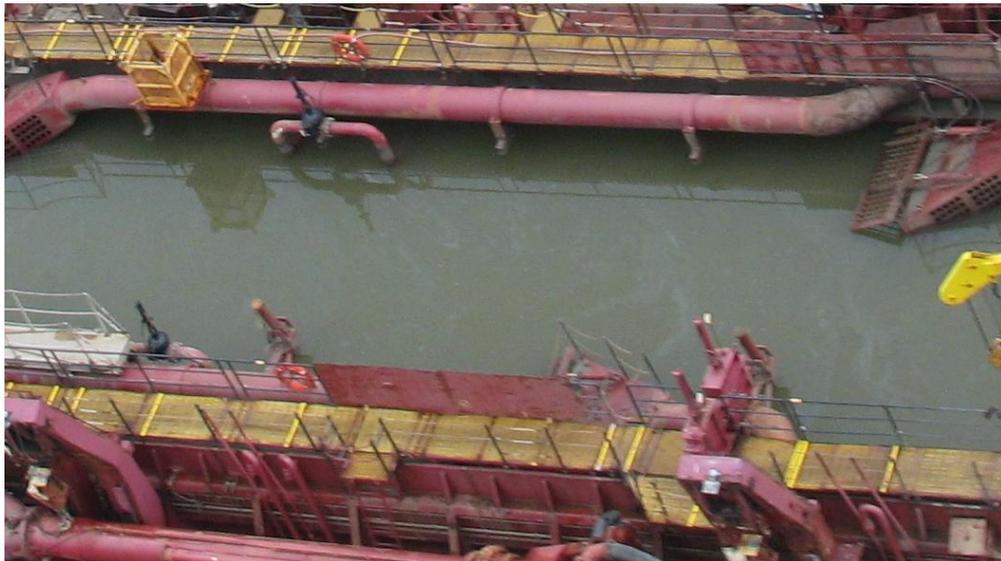


Tanker and Barge Collision in New Orleans, LA Update August 1, 1000 EDT

Updates:

- As reported briefly on 7/30/08, the damaged barge involved in the collision last week shifted and released an estimated 60 bbls (2500 gallons) of oil. NOAA prepared an updated trajectory for the newly-released oil.
- The additional oil resulted in a 2 mile closure of the river and several nearby water intakes were closed out of caution. Oil is still slowly leaking from the vessel but the leak rate is much reduced. Water intakes are open and the river traffic has resumed with restrictions on vessel wake and speed.
- A plan has been developed to resume dredging at Head of Passes while monitoring for signs of oil coming up with the dredged material. This plan is expected to be executed today.



Oil sheens on dredged material at Head of Passes caused shut-down of dredging operations 100 miles downriver from spill site. USCG Photo.

- Salvors plan is to complete stabilization of the barge this weekend and begin pumping operations to remove residual oil. There is still no estimate for how much is onboard and the surveys of the barge indicate that one tank may be intact. The slow pace of the salvage operation is an indication of the

complexity of the project, with divers working in 3+ knot currents, jagged unstable metal, leaking oil, and essentially zero visibility.

- The USCG reports that more than 2,000 responders are currently deployed throughout the region affected by the spill and 115,000 gallons of an oil/water mix has been recovered to date.
- The NRDA teams continue to conduct preliminary assessment activities including shoreline and water sampling. Samples collected over time from the same shoreline will be analyzed to help evaluate the rate of natural degradation.

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- **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. Thirteen NOAA employees and contractors are on-scene and additional staff are expected to arrive this weekend.
- **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.
- **Information Management:** The NOAA Scientific Support Team (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:** Shoreline Assessment work is ongoing and additional NOAA staff are expected to arrive this weekend or early next week to assist in the several hundred mile survey effort.
- **Cleanup Standards:** The NOAA team is also assisting the USCG in developing cleanup endpoints to define the completion of response activities. Cleanup standards will vary depending on the location and sensitivity of the adjacent habitats.
- **Contaminated Sediments:** The Team continues to work with the Army Corps of Engineers on the oil contamination-dredging issue down in the Delta. Sampling of dredged materials is ongoing and plans are being developed to deal with the contaminated material already in the barges and disposal of any future sediment shown to be contaminated with oil. A new temporary dump site has been identified. NOAA SSC briefed the Regional Response Team on the plan for resuming dredging.

- **Information Products for Unified Command:** 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:** 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

Ten days 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.