

NOAA Update 23 April 2010, AM

NOAA has a Scientific Support Team on-scene responding to the incident involving a deepwater drilling platform approximately 51 miles southeast of Venice, Louisiana. An explosion and subsequent fire damaged the rig which capsized and sank yesterday after burning for hours. It is unclear how much of an estimated 700,000 gallons (approximately 16,700 barrels) of #2 fuel onboard burned before it sank. Two remotely-operated vehicles (ROV) are surveying the well head and nearby pipelines for any leaking oil. Scattered black oil and sheens continue to extend several miles from the source location.

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) has Scientific Support Coordinators (SSC) on-scene at the USCG Command Center in Houma, LA and at the BP Command Post in Houston, TX. A support team is in place, including one additional SSC, an over-flight specialist, an environmental specialist, an information manager, and two natural resource damage specialists. Additional oceanographic, chemical and biological support is being provided remotely by OR&R scientists in Seattle. The NOAA Weather Service is providing forecasting support. Information from the NOAA Data Buoy Center is being used in oil trajectory forecasting. NOAA Fisheries is engaged on issues related to marine mammals, sea turtles, and fishery resources.

The latest NOAA oil-spill trajectory analysis indicates that the oil is not expected to reach land through the forecasted weather period of Tuesday, April 27. Trajectory analyses are dependent upon the accuracy of wind and current predictions. Louisiana and Mississippi are at highest risk for first contact. Oil skimming and dispersant application operations are ongoing with multiple response vessels staged in the area. Thunderstorms and high winds forecast for April 23 – 25 will impact response and recovery operations.

For NOAA media inquiries please contact John Ewald or Keeley Belva at (301) 713-3066.

A Joint Information Center has been established for response inquiries at (504) 671-2293.