



ISCO NEWSLETTER

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USA: DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL WELL RELEASE UPDATE

It's more than a month now since the explosion and fire, and subsequent sinking, of the Deepwater Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the success last week of the Riser Tube Insertion Tool oil is continuing to leak and the question is "How much?"

The average quantity being recovered by the insertion tube is around 2,000 bbl per day and, based on an original leak size estimate of around 5,000 bbl/day, it might be deduced that up to 40% of the leaking oil is being recovered. However, the 5,000 bbl/day figure was an estimate only and the real figure could be very much higher. To answer the question the government has assembled a team of experts to study all the evidence and try to make a realistic estimate of the quantity of oil spilt to date and the amount that is continuing to spill.

Meantime, efforts to completely stop the oil release continue with immediate focus on application of "top kill" methodology – high pressure injection of heavy mud, followed up by cement to seal the well. Following on substantial work to determine how this can be done in a safe and effective way, and the assembly and preparation of all of the necessary sub-sea and surface equipment, it is hoped to commence the "top kill" this week, possibly as early as Tuesday. This has never been attempted before at such a depth.

Work also continues on the readying of back-up strategies – the so-called "Junk Shot" (injection of materials to clog up and block oil leaking through the BOP), hot tapping of the riser, valve installation, further capping, and even the fitting of a second BOP above the existing one. The large coffer dam structure and small "top hat" remain located nearby on the sea bed available if required.

On May 21 it was advised that the drilling of the first relief well was progressing well and had reached 8,950' ahead of schedule, drilling and BOP testing for the second relief well was ongoing.

Good weather conditions over the last few days have allowed surface operations to progress well, with numerous burns and high volumes of oil being recovered by skimmers. Thanks to ideal conditions, oily water picked up by skimmers operating in open sea has contained up to 50% or more of oil – a great improvement on typical recovery rates of 10% or less.



Sub-sea injection of dispersant has also been continuing but, with little available mixing energy from wave action, surface spraying operations have been suspended.

On May 18 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that it was nearly doubling the portion of the Gulf's federal waters that are now closed to fishing. NOAA's latest order extends the closed zone to a nearly 46,000-square-mile stretch, about 19 percent of the Gulf.

As at May 21 it was reported that the main body of the slick on the surface was not drifting towards the current loop and a change in current flow would also reduce threat of shoreline impact in Florida. Following analysis, it was confirmed that tarballs observed on Florida shorelines had not originated from the BP oil spill.

However, emulsified oil has impacted shorelines of Louisiana, affecting wetlands and other sensitive areas. Shoreline cleaning operations are ongoing using techniques selected to minimise environmental damage. Manual methods are being used on beaches (rakes, shovels, etc) and, where appropriate, in wetlands, low pressure water flushing, sorbents and shallow water oil skimmers.

Following representations from state governors proposals from the US Corps of Engineers are under consideration. The idea would be to use dredgers to build barrier islands to protect the coastline. In some areas, small scale barriers have already been created using sandbags.

The numbers – As at May 22, approximately 24,900 personnel are currently responding to protect the shoreline and wildlife; more than 1,100 vessels are responding on site, including skimmers, tugs, barges, and recovery vessels to assist in containment and cleanup efforts—in addition to dozens of aircraft, remotely operated vehicles, and multiple mobile offshore drilling units; more than 1.52 million feet of containment boom and 560,000 feet of sorbent boom have been deployed to contain the spill—and approximately 310,000 feet of containment boom and 1.27 million feet of sorbent boom are available; approximately 9.7 million gallons of an oil-water mix have been recovered; approximately 715,000 gallons of total dispersant have been deployed—630,000 on the surface and 85,000 subsea. More than 375,000 gallons are available; 17 staging areas are in place and ready to protect sensitive shorelines.

EUROPE: EMSA HAS PUBLISHED 2009 MARITIME ACCIDENT REVIEW – “19.5% FEWER SHIP ACCIDENTS IN EU DURING 2009 YET TREND MAY BE REVERSING”

Lisbon, 20 May 2010 - Today, in the context of the *EU Maritime Day* event in Gijón, Spain, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) launches its *Maritime Accident Review 2009*. The review, which looks at shipping in and around EU waters, shows a 19.5% drop in total accidents, and 17% drop in the number of ships involved in accidents in 2009 in comparison to the market boom years of 2007/2008, although the number was still significantly higher than in 2006. The figures also show that loss of life and pollution were substantially reduced.

However, the Agency advises caution in assuming that the downward trend will continue, as an early look at January 2010 figures suggests that accident figures are already beginning to increase again as shipping traffic begins to recover.

The review is the third in an annual series of reports that aim to make both the EU maritime community and EU citizens aware of what shipping accidents are happening in-and-around EU waters. The reviews provide information on a range of accidents, such as sinkings, groundings, collisions or contacts, fires or explosions, together with some analysis of trends.

'EMSA's *Maritime Accident Review* gives us an annual opportunity to look at accidents occurring in and around European waters, and to assess whether measures taken to improve maritime safety are having an effect,' says EMSA Executive Director Willem de Ruyter. 'The positive news is that, while the global economic crisis can be seen as a 'commercial cloud' for shipping, it has a silver lining in terms of maritime safety. The latest review recorded a significant reduction in shipping accidents, lives lost and pollution last year. However, with ship traffic and the associated commercial pressures on the increase once more, we cannot afford to let our guard down at any time.'

The Maritime Accident Review 2009 can be downloaded from the EMSA website home page at <http://www.emsa.europa.eu/>

USA: REPUBLICAN SENATOR BLOCKS HIGHER LIABILITY CAP ON OIL SPILLS

President Obama denounced Republicans on Tuesday for "playing special-interest politics" after a GOP senator thwarted a Democratic effort to raise the liability cap for oil spills to \$10 billion.

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) was seeking the unanimous consent of the Senate to move forward on the Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act, which would retroactively boost the legal cap of \$75 million on how much companies must pay for economic damages.

But Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.) blocked the effort, saying it would make drilling too expensive for smaller companies. "Big Oil would love to have these caps there so they can shut out all the independents," he said, echoing the argument of Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who halted an identical move last week. Read more at:

http://mobile.latimes.com/inf/infomo?view=page1&feed:a=latimes_1min&feed:c=nationnews&feed:i=53811018

USA: GULF OIL SPILL - ADMIRAL THAD ALLEN TO STAY ON AS NATIONAL INCIDENT COMMANDER

On May 20 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano announced that U.S. Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen has agreed to remain in his current role as National Incident Commander for the administration's continued, coordinated response to the Deepwater BP Oil Spill after stepping down from his post as Coast Guard Commandant later this month as planned—enabling him to focus solely on managing the unprecedented response effort.



“Because Admiral Allen’s leadership has been so critical to our coordinated response to the BP Oil Spill, I have asked him—and he has agreed—to stay on as National Incident Commander after he steps down as Commandant of the Coast Guard later this month,” said Secretary Napolitano. “I commend his dedication to continuing to lead our administration-wide efforts to ensure that every available resource is leveraged efficiently and effectively to mitigate the spill’s impacts.”

“Since this event began, my focus has been on managing the all-hands-on-deck response to this ongoing incident,” said Admiral Allen. “Remaining in my current role as the National Incident Commander after being relieved as the Commandant will allow me to focus solely on this critical response, and Admiral Papp on the vital work of the Coast Guard.”

As planned and previously announced, Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., will relieve Admiral Allen as Commandant later this month. [Source: Joint Information Center press release]

USA: GULF OIL SPILL - BP DEFENDS DISPERSANT AFTER EPA ORDERS IT CHANGED

BP, in response to a directive from the U.S. government to switch the type of chemical dispersant it's been using to break up the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, said it still believes that the product it has been using is the best option.

"Based on the information that is available today, BP continues to believe that Corexit was the best and most appropriate choice at the time when the incident occurred, and that Corexit remains the best option for subsea application," BP said in a letter dated May 20 and released Saturday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. BP said Corexit is effective, safe for the environment and that other potential dispersants aren't available in sufficient quantities.

The EPA on Thursday ordered BP to identify and use a less toxic and more effective dispersant than Corexit, which is manufactured by Nalco Holding Co. (NLC) of Naperville, Ill. The EPA said the alternative needed to be identified within 24 hours and implemented within 72 hours after that. The EPA said that, if BP didn't identify an available alternative, it had to provide the Coast Guard and the EPA with a detailed description of the alternatives that were investigated and the reasons why they aren't suitable.

In a release Saturday, the EPA said it met with BP to discuss the matter on Friday after receiving the letter late Thursday evening. The EPA said it will continue to work over the next 48 hours to ensure that BP is complying with the directive.

Corexit is on the list of the EPA's approved dispersants, which are commonly used to break up oil during spills, usually on the water's surface. But the agency noted in its directive on Thursday that BP's use of the product is unprecedented both in terms of the amount used and the depth at which it is being used. The oil is emanating from a broken pipe a mile beneath the surface.

BP said in its letter--which was signed by Chief Operating Officer Doug Suttles and addressed to the EPA and Coast Guard--that Corexit was the only dispersant that was available in sufficient quantities at the time of the spill. BP also noted that Corexit was 55% to 63% effective in dispersing samples of South Louisiana Crude. Read more at:

http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20100522-702014.html?mod=WSJ_latestheadlines

USA: AN OIL SPILL GROWS IN BROOKLYN

The disaster in the Gulf of Mexico may eventually prove to be the largest oil spill in American history but New Yorkers forget, or don't know, that a much larger oil spill sits in our own backyard: an estimated 17 million to 30 million gallons of oil, benzene, naphtha and other carcinogenic chemicals pollute Newtown Creek and a swath of soil roughly 55 acres wide and up to 25 feet deep, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

Starting in the 1870s, however, Standard Oil and other refineries began spilling or dumping excess fuels and toxic chemicals into the water or onto the soil, slowly poisoning the ecosystem. Despite an underground explosion fed by accumulated oil and gas in 1950, as well as persistent health problems among the creek's neighbors, it wasn't until 1978 that officials recognized the problem. That summer a Coast Guard helicopter on a routine patrol noticed a huge black oil plume spewing from the side of Newtown Creek, heading into the East River and New York Harbor. A containment boom was set out, and workers collected 200,000 gallons of degraded gasoline, fuel oil and chemicals, some of which dated to 1948. Read the unabridged story in the New York Times article at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/opinion/16Prudhomme.html> ("a much larger spill" ?)

T&T BISSO TEAMS UP WITH CISPRI

T&T BISSO, an industry leader in vessel emergency response, salvage and marine firefighting services, is pleased to announce an exclusive cooperative services agreement with Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response (CISPRI). Based in Nikiski, Alaska, CISPRI is a comprehensive standby oil spill response cooperative whose mission is to provide immediate response capability to its member companies.

The agreement provides a unique platform for OPA 90 related salvage, emergency lightering, firefighting and oil spill response services in Alaskan waters and further strengthens the planning and response posture for tankers and non-tank vessels operating in the area. In 2009, T&T BISSO deployed and permanently stationed emergency response resources with CISPRI to serve the Cook Inlet and Alaska areas and participated in equipment deployment exercises in Kachemak Bay to demonstrate response capabilities.

T&T BISSO was the first OPA 90 salvage and marine firefighting provider to receive United States Coast Guard approval of its primary resource provider agreement. "We are the most committed resource provider in the effort to provide vessel owners with a comprehensive salvage and marine firefighting compliance package," said Mauricio Garrido, general manager, Americas and Europe. <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/tt-bisso-teams-cispri/#>

TITAN SALVAGE SUCCESSFULLY REMOVES FUEL FROM A SUBMERGED VESSEL OFF THE SOUTHERN COAST OF SAINT LUCIA

TITAN Salvage has successfully removed 230 tons of fuel from a submerged vessel off the southern coast of Saint Lucia. The 6,704-gross-ton fully cellular containership (657-TEU capacity), which was en route to Guyana in late February, capsized and sank in 105 feet of water about two miles from the port Vieux-Fort. No lives were lost in the incident. TITAN was contracted by vessel owners to remove the hydrocarbons and other hazardous materials onboard. TITAN worked closely with Saint Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority (SLASPA), and local contractors to safely complete the fuel removal to safely complete the fuel removal operation mitigating the risk of an environmental incident.

The removal of fuel and other contaminants onboard the vessel was performed by a team of seven TITAN divers working from a supply vessel moored over the casualty. The vessel functioned as dive platform as well as place to receive and store the contaminated bunker fuel. While divers worked in near perfect visibility in turquoise Caribbean waters, they regularly encountered rough seas and strong currents. <http://www.maritime-executive.com/pressrelease/titan-salvage-successfully-removes-fuel-submerged-vessel-southern-coast-saint-lucia/>