



Oil Spill: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Enbridge Oil Spill

Marshall, Michigan

August 2010

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the Enbridge oil spill you can contact:

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Coordinator

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On the Web

EPA has established a website at www.epa.gov/enbridgespill to provide daily information about the response.

More contacts

Public:

A toll-free number for the public has been established for this emergency:

800-306-6837

Media members:

888-363-8632

spillpress@epa.gov

On Monday, July 26, 2010, Enbridge Energy Partners LLP reported the burst of a 30-inch pipeline near Marshall, Michigan. The company estimates that more than 800,000 gallons of crude oil spilled into Talmadge Creek, a waterway that feeds the Kalamazoo River. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has not independently confirmed this number. The spill has affected up to 25 miles of the Kalamazoo River. The spill site, between Marshall and Battle Creek, includes marshlands, residential areas, farmland and businesses.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the spill situation:

General FAQ

What areas are affected by the oil spill?

The Enbridge Oil Spill and Response affects communities along Talmadge Creek and the Kalamazoo River in Calhoun County and Kalamazoo County, Michigan. EPA and unified federal, state and local agencies want people to be aware of possible threats to human health and the environment associated with crude oil contamination.

Health FAQs

What is causing the odor? Will cleanup activities increase odor problems?

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) found in the crude oil are causing the odors. **You can smell most pollutants related to the oil spill well below levels that would cause health problems.** During the cleanup process, more odors may be released into the air as the oil is stirred up. The odors will be strongest near locations where crude oil is present.

Is the odor bad for my health?

It is important to understand that people are able to smell some VOCs at levels lower than would cause long-term health problems. Some of the chemicals that cause the odors may cause headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting. If you are sensitive to VOCs, stay indoors. If you continue to experience odor problems, contact the Enbridge public information line, 800-306-6837. If possible, close windows and doors, turn your air conditioner on and set to a recirculation mode. If you have severe nausea or other medical issues, please see your health care provider as soon as possible.

What if I have health concerns about the spill?

If you live in an area affected by the oil spill and have questions about the potential impact on your health, call your doctor or contact the Calhoun County Public Health Department, 269-969-6341, or the Kalamazoo County Health Department at 269-373-5210. If you are experiencing serious health problems, seek immediate medical care or call 911.

Why are families being asked to voluntarily evacuate or relocate? Will I need to leave my home?

EPA is monitoring the air around-the-clock. The tools they are using can provide immediate information about the levels of chemicals in the air. The air sampling results have shown one chemical – benzene - at a level of potential concern for long-term health. Based on these concerns, the Calhoun County Public Health Department issued a voluntary evacuation notice on July 29 for people living in the most highly impacted areas. As the response progresses, it is possible there will be additional need for relocations.

- **Who will take care of my pets if I am evacuated voluntarily?**
Enbridge has committed assistance to anyone who lives within the voluntary relocation areas along the Kalamazoo River. Those affected should call the Enbridge public information line, 800-306-6837, where specific questions regarding individual situations can be answered.

What is being done to protect us from chemicals from the oil spill?

Public health officials are continuing to have air and water tested for harmful chemicals in affected areas around-the-clock. Based on these test results, officials are making decisions about the need to take actions such as evacuation recommendations and water advisories. Monitoring of air and water will continue as necessary to protect human health and the environment.

How might benzene affect my health?

In some areas affected by the spill, Calhoun County Public Health Department issued voluntary evacuation notices based on the level of benzene

measured in the air. Exposure to these levels of benzene can affect people differently. Some people may feel sleepy or dizzy. Others may get headaches. Benzene can also cause nausea, vomiting or a rapid heart rate. Long-term exposures to benzene may increase your risk of cancer. This is one of the key reasons the Calhoun County Public Health Department issued a voluntary evacuation, recommending residents temporarily relocate from the most highly impacted areas until the oil-related chemicals no longer pose a human health threat.

Who will pay for my doctor visits and medical bills?

People directly affected by the oil spill should call the Enbridge public information line, 800-306-6837, with specific questions regarding individual situations.

Have municipal water systems been affected by the spill?

Marshall and Battle Creek municipal water systems have NOT been affected by the oil spill. To date, there have been no indications the spill has contaminated any municipal water supply. Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, EPA sets legal limits on the levels of certain contaminants in drinking water to protect human health. Water systems have routine water testing schedules and methods that they must follow to detect contaminated water. These rules also list acceptable techniques for treating contaminated water.

Will my private well be impacted by the oil spill?

Calhoun County Public Health Department and Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services officials have been evaluating the potential impact the spill has had on private water wells. The health departments have been conducting a systematic evaluation of private drinking wells located within 200 feet of either side of the Kalamazoo River and Talmadge Creek. At this point, no well contamination has been detected. Calhoun County Public Health Department (CCPHD) and Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services (HCS) will continue to evaluate residents' well water in the affected area.

As a precaution, CCPHD and HCS are providing bottled water for drinking and cooking to those who live in homes with wells in those areas. If you have concerns about your private well, contact the Calhoun County Public Health Department, 269-969-6341, or the Kalamazoo County Health Department at 269-373-5210.

Wells outside the 200-foot area on either side of these waters are not likely to be affected by the spill since underground water supplies (“ground water” in environmental terms) typically flow toward rivers. Irrigation activities are not expected to affect either the direction of the ground water flow or well quality outside the 200-foot areas.

My water tastes or smells different. What should I do?

If you have concerns about your water, contact the Calhoun County Public Health Department, 269-969-6341, or the Kalamazoo County Health Department at 269-373-5210.

Can I swim or boat in the Kalamazoo River?

Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services has issued a ban on surface water activities on the Kalamazoo River as part of the county’s state of emergency, including swimming, wading, fishing, boating, canoeing and kayaking. Local health officials warn citizens to avoid all contact with water from the Kalamazoo River until further notice.

Calhoun County Public Health Department has issued a ban on the use of water from Talmadge Creek and the Kalamazoo River in Calhoun County for irrigation or livestock watering purposes. The Calhoun health department has also posted signs along the river saying it is closed for all swimming, boating and fishing.

Additionally, Michigan Department of Community Health advises that no one should swim, boat or touch the water of the Kalamazoo River from the west side of Morrow Lake upstream to the spill site.

Can we eat fish caught from the Kalamazoo River and Morrow Lake?

The Michigan Department of Community Health has issued an advisory for the waters downstream

(west) of I-69 on the Kalamazoo River to the west end of Morrow Lake. No one should eat fish of any kind from this stretch of the river. All post-oil spill fish advisories continue for other parts of the Kalamazoo River. See the Michigan Department of Community Health website for more information.

What should I do if I happen to get oil on my skin or clothing?

Wash affected skin with soap and water. Avoid using harsh detergents, solvents or other chemicals to wash oil from skin as they may promote absorption of the oil through the skin.

If you get oil on your clothing, wash in the usual way but separate from other clothing.

Wildlife and livestock FAQs

How does this affect livestock?

The Michigan Department of Agriculture has issued a ban on using the Kalamazoo River for drinking water for any animal or for irrigation (including watering lawns and golf courses). The ban was revised Aug. 7 to include only the Kalamazoo River above Morrow Dam and upstream to the point of the spill or any connected waters. More information is available from the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

What should I do if I see wildlife that has been exposed to the oil?

A wildlife rehabilitation center is open and receiving wildlife. If you see affected wildlife, call 800-306-6837. More information about spills and helping wildlife is available on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife website.

Response FAQs

What government agencies have responded to the emergency?

As Federal On-Scene Coordinator, EPA is leading the unified federal, state and local response to the incident. Emergency responders are working around-the-clock throughout the affected area. The unified response team includes federal, state and local agencies and EPA-approved contract workers.

Six primary agencies have responded to the emergency:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE)
- Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division
- Calhoun County Public Health Department
- Calhoun County Sheriff
- Kalamazoo County Sheriff

Supporting and assisting agencies:

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (division of U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services)
- Allegan County Emergency Management
- American Red Cross
- Augusta Police Department
- B&B Fire Safety Emergency Response
- Calhoun Conservation District
- Calhoun County Commissioners
- Calhoun County Drain Commission
- Calhoun County Sheriff's Office
- Calhoun County Treasurers Office
- Calhoun Conservation District
- Calhoun Greenation District
- City of Battle Creek, Michigan
- City of Marshall, Michigan
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Fredonia Township Fire Department
- Huron Potawatomi
- Kalamazoo County Office of Emergency Management
- Kalamazoo Public Safety
- Kalamazoo County Health Department
- Kalamazoo Watershed Council
- Marshall Township Government and Fire Department
- Marshall Police Department
- Michigan Department of Community Health
- Michigan Occupational Safety & Health Administration
- Natural Resource Group
- Pipeline Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- U.S. Coast Guard – U.S. Department of Transportation
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration

How is the spill being contained?

So far, containment measures have limited the impact of the spill on the Kalamazoo River. To control the spill as much as possible, EPA and Enbridge have been placing containment and absorbent booms at strategic points on the river. Containment booms keep the oil from spreading. Absorbent booms, in addition to stopping movement, soak up the oil.

The response also includes the use of vacuum trucks and skimmer equipment to remove oil from the surface of the water.

What measures are being taken for the health and safety of those responding to the spill?

EPA, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) and state and local responders have specific guidelines for working in an oil-related chemical environment. Cleanup crews must have specific safety training, skill sets, qualifications and certifications to ensure the safety of the spill site. Additionally, those working within the oil-affected areas are required to wear specific personal protective equipment. Safety and health officials are also on-scene monitoring oil spill response activities.

Will the spill affect the Kalamazoo River Superfund site?

The initial spill occurred near Marshall, and the Kalamazoo River Superfund site is not expected to be affected by the spill. However, officials continue to monitor developments on the river.