

Guidance regarding air quality concerns resulting from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill

May 2010

As a result of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, federal and state agencies are monitoring outdoor air for several pollutants that are associated with petroleum products and the burning of oil. The following federal and state resources provide information on how to respond to the air quality issues presented by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Information on Air Quality Concerns

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Response to BP Spill in the Gulf of Mexico offers up to date information detailing EPA's response, recent air quality and water quality data, along with frequently asked questions and guidance for response. Environmental data, such as air quality and water samples, are also updated frequently as it is collected and validated by EPA's response teams along the impacted coastlines. This data is meant to determine potential risks to public health and the environment. It is available online at <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>.

The Environmental Protection Agency has also initiated an air monitoring effort to ensure the safety of local residents and track any developing air quality changes. Please visit <http://airnow.gov> for full coverage and other information.

Additional resources from the EPA include:

- [Air Monitoring on Gulf Coastline](#) (EPA)
- [Current Air Quality along the Gulf Coast](#) (EPA)
- [Air Quality Concerns: Questions and Answers](#) (EPA)

The National Library of Medicine's webpage, [Crude Oil Spills and Health](#), provides links to information and resources that further discuss air quality and health concerns caused from oil spills:

- [Exposure to Oil Fires/Oil Fire Smoke \(PDF, 29 KB\)](#) U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine
- [Health and Safety Aspects of In-situ Burning of Oil \(PDF, 31 KB\)](#) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Additional information is also available on the National Library of Medicine's webpage regarding how the United States responds to oil spills, state agencies in the Gulf region that respond to spills, occupational hazards for professionals and volunteers assisting with clean-up, seafood safety and more.

Information on Hazardous Substances

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets:

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- Fuel Oils ToxFAQs, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) accessible at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=515&tid=91>
- Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons ToxFAQs, CDC accessible at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/TF.asp?id=423&tid=75>

Situation Reports and Updates

There are numerous federal and state resources providing situation awareness reports, updates, and guidance for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Deepwater Horizon Federal Joint Information Center is the official agency coordinating response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, also known as “Deepwater Horizon.” The joint information center website consolidates response information from the federal government, British Petroleum (BP), and Transocean. Information includes updated incident reports, maps, state information and contingency plans, Fact Sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, as well as volunteer information and an ongoing response timeline.

- Web site: <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com>
- Twitter: http://twitter.com/Oil_Spill_2010
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/DeepwaterHorizonResponse>
- YouTube: <http://www.facebook.com/DeepwaterHorizonResponse>
- Media and government telephone inquiries: (985) 902-5231 or (985) 902-5240

Additional Federal Resources

NOAA Office of Response and Restoration is the nation’s leading scientific resource for oil spills and has been on the scene of the oil spill from the start, providing coordinated scientific weather and biological response services to federal, state, and local organizations. Situation reports are provided daily; trajectory maps showing the predicted path of the oil slick are released twice a day.

- Web site: <http://www.response.restoration.noaa.gov/>

NASA is also monitoring the Gulf oil spill using satellite imagery.

- Web site: <http://www.nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/oil-creep.html>

State Level Contingency Plans

- “Alabama, Mississippi, and Northwest Florida Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Area Contingency Plan” contains documents, references, policies, PDF maps, and Google Earth files for use in pollution response within the USCG Sector Mobile Area of Responsibility. Access these files online at <http://ocean.floridamarine.org/acp/mobacp/>.

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- “St. Petersburg (Florida) Digital Area Contingency Plan” contains links to the Area Contingency Plan, Tidal Inlet Protection Strategies, ICS forms, documents, policy letters, and Memorandums of Understanding. This information is available online at <http://ocean.floridamarine.org/ACP/STPACP/StartHere.html>.

State Level Resources

Deepwater Horizon Unified Command is the primary agency monitoring and coordinating response efforts. Deepwater Horizon Unified Command established a website where photos, press releases, and fact sheets are available at www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com.

The following resources from the affected states are also available:

Alabama

- Alabama Department of Health has compiled a list of frequently asked questions regarding the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. This information is available online at <http://www.adph.org/riskcommunication/Default.asp?id=4362>. The Fact Sheet ADPH Issues Precautions Related to Gulf Oil Spill is also available on the Department’s website.
- Alabama Governor Bob Rile’s website has a page devoted to providing updates regarding the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Access this information online at <http://www.governor.alabama.gov/oilspill/>.

Florida

- The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) has been charged with leading with the Florida effort of oil spill preparation and response. Information specific to the oil spill is available online at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/default.htm>.
- “Latest News” regarding Florida’s cleanup and recovery efforts is also accessible at <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/>. Updates from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection are available via Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/fldepalert>. Residents may also contact the Florida State Emergency Information Line at (800) 342-3557.

Louisiana

- Emergency.louisiana.gov is the state’s online resource for information regarding the response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, general information for the public and updates for the media. Updates are also available via Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/gohsep/> and Twitter: GOHSEP.
- The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) is working with the EPA to monitor air quality in the impacted areas. According to the website, “While there may be

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a petroleum odor, the fumes do not pose a health risk. Residents should stay indoors if the odors, which may cause nausea or headaches, bother them.” Additional information, including updates, can be found online at <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=378>.

Mississippi

- The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency has opened a call center to answer questions regarding the oil spill. Questions can be directed to (866) 920-MEMA (6362). Calls are answered between 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Central Time).
- Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is also providing status updates via the website at <http://www.msema.org/gulfrecovery/>. Links to receive updates via Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are also accessible at <http://www.msema.org/>.
- The Mississippi Department of Health has issued an Oil Spill Q&A containing guidance and information regarding air, food, and water safety. This information is available online and can be downloaded from http://healthys.com/msdhsite/_static/23,9689,195.html.
- Additional guidance regarding public health issues resulting from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is online at http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/23,9679,341.html.