

June 4, 2010



North Carolina Prepares for Effects from the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

The state of North Carolina is closely monitoring BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. State and federal agencies are coordinating plans to be fully prepared to respond in case the oil reaches our state. The U.S. Coast Guard is currently projecting that there is a remote chance that the oil could reach this far north and threaten North Carolina's coast.

BP is the responsible party for the oil spill and is leading the response. The Coast Guard and U.S. Department of Interior, along with other federal agencies, have joined with BP as part of the Unified Command.

North Carolina has an oil spill response plan that defines roles and responsibilities for responding agencies. The plan is available on the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety's Web site under the Division of Emergency Management. It can be viewed on the web by clicking here: www.nccrimecontrol.org/div/EM/documents/NCEOP-2009-PublicVersion.pdf. The oil response plan is on pages 433-480. CCPS is currently working with the Coast Guard and other federal and state agencies to review this response plan and make any changes that may be needed to deal with a spill of this unparalleled scope.

The Coast Guard is the lead agency in charge if oil threatens coastal waters, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is the lead for inland waters. The N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety and its Division of Emergency Management is the lead state response agency. The N.C. State Emergency Response Team, headed by the state emergency management director, assists federal agencies, coordinates state preparations and response activities and works with local communities and responders.

State response agencies include the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Health and Human Services, and more.

Key Messages

- North Carolina beaches are open and no closures are anticipated at this time due to this situation. However, there are swimming advisories as

- issued by the Division of Environmental Health's Recreational Water Quality Program staff, based on bacteriological results.
- Occasional tarballs on beaches in North Carolina are not a new phenomenon and are common from activities un-related to this oil spill.
 - Should oil reach our state's waters, the North Carolina Division of Public Health advises residents to follow these guidelines:
 - Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil spill-affected water and sediments.
 - Do not swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill, and if you must travel through the area by boat, take precautions when hoisting the boat anchor.
 - Do not fish in the oil spill-affected waters.
 - Do not harvest and eat dead seafood, seafood with oily residue, or seafood that has a petroleum odor.
 - Do not drive your boat through oil slicks or oil sheens.
 - Young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems and individuals with underlying respiratory conditions should avoid affected areas.
 - Do not let pets enter oil-affected areas.
 - Do not burn debris, driftwood or other materials contaminated with oil.
 - If oil gets on your clothing, wash separately from the family laundry. You may use your regular detergents.
 - The odor is not a health risk. However, if you experience severe incidents of nausea or respiratory problems seek medical attention.
 - Residents bothered by the odor are advised to stay indoors and run their air conditioners in recirculation mode.
 - **IMPORTANT:** If you get oil on your skin, wash it off immediately with soap and water or hand-cleansers meant to remove oils and grease. If you develop a rash, see your doctor and tell them how you came into contact with the oil.

Shellfish and Recreational Water Issues

DENR Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality Program staffs are monitoring the situation and do not plan any actions if and until oil is detected in the Gulf Stream and in the water off the North Carolina coast. The estimated travel time to North Carolina waters is thought to be about four weeks from when the oil particles potentially reach the area near Naples, Fla.

The DENR Recreational Water Quality Program samples the beaches for bacteria and advises that there is not a correlation between oil in the water and increased levels of bacteria. Recreation water rules are based on the results of enterococci bacterial sampling. For contaminants other than bacteria, the state or local health director can order the beach closed to protect the public.

If oil enters the inlets, there would be a concern for shellfishing waters.

Public Health and Shellfish Sanitation will continue to monitor reports from Florida and the Gulf, and watch for reports that oil is in the Keys and along Miami beaches.

Key Information Resources

www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/doc/2931/552115

www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/doctype/2931/53023/

Federal government coordinated response:

www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/site/2931/

EPA response to Gulf oil spill: www.epa.gov/bpspill/

Both sites above have links on their pages to social media pages as well.

Subscribe to spill updates (reach from home page of EPA, upper left in banner):

www.epa.gov/

NOAA Public Affairs Office: 202-482-6090; www.noaa.gov

Coast Guard North Carolina Sector Headquarters in Atlantic Beach:
252-247-4501

N.C. Sea Grant's list of scientific experts:

<http://www.ncseagrant.org/home/about-ncsg/news-events?task=showArticle&id=761&category=news>

www.nccrimecontrol.org

www.enr.state.nc.us

www.ncdhs.gov