



Spill Update: Whitley Fuel Fire and Petroleum Spill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 25, 2007

4:30 p.m./Release # 3

Joint Information Center: 509-990-9177

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Fire investigation contact: Brian Schaeffer, City of Spokane Fire Department, 509-625-7002

Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/incidents/whitleyfire/whitleyfire.html>

(The site now includes a photo gallery)

Correction (from 12:30 p.m. update) – Debris from the fire, as it is examined and cleaned up, will NOT go to the Waste-to-Energy Plant, as was previously reported. This issue has yet to be decided.

Spill Status Report as of 4:30 p.m.

Date of spill: July 23, 2007

Responsible Party: Whitley Fuel LLC

Location: Whitley Fuel, 2733 N. Pittsburg Road, Spokane

Type of petroleum products: mixed (includes motor oil, diesel fuel, racing fuel, hydraulic and transmission fluid, lubricating oil, etc.)

Amount spilled: Unknown

Cause or source of the spill: Fire (cause under investigation)

Organizations involved: Washington state departments of Ecology and Fish & Wildlife, City of Spokane Water Department, Whitley Fuel LLC, and private environmental cleanup contractors

Update

A second helicopter fly-over was conducted earlier this afternoon. Department of Ecology and clean-up contractors hired by Whitley Fuel saw what appeared to be an oily “sheen” in a wetland upstream of Nine-Mile Dam on the Spokane River.

A similar sheen was spotted in a second wetland near the Spokane House boat launch.

Sheen also was visible from the air on the river in several other areas – some of which appeared to be heavy in density and other patches that appeared to be lighter. The heaviest patches were

observed near the Nine Mile Dam. Sheen was also visible on the downstream side of Nine Mile Dam.

One ribbon of sheen was approximately three yards wide and ran discontinuously from Plese Flats Park to Seven Mile Bridge.

Whether or not the sheen contains petroleum is currently under investigation. The substance that was observed may contain organic materials such as leaves and twigs.

Crews from the state departments of Ecology and Department of Fish and Wildlife are evaluating the sheen pockets to determine if they contain petroleum products and if it can be recovered from the water. If so, the next step will be determining cleanup options.

A possible reason that the sheen was not visible yesterday was that the windy weather made it difficult. Another possibility was that the 360 gallons of fire-fighting foam (a surfactant) that was used on the fire Monday night, is starting to biodegrade, allowing oil and other petroleum products to surface.

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