



Spill Update: Whitley Fuel Fire and Petroleum Spill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 26, 2007

1:30 p.m./Release # 4

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

Spill Status Report as of 1:30 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, Spokane Regional Health District, Whitley Fuel LLC, and private environmental cleanup contractors.

Update

Whitley Fuel site

- Crews are continuing to monitor potential runoff from the Whitley Oil site.
- Petroleum products in a grassy swale near the Whitley Oil site were excavated to protect a nearby city drinking-water well. The swale will be covered today to avoid future precipitation from pushing any remaining contamination down to the groundwater.
- The environmental status of the swale will continue to be monitored.
- The Spokane City Water also has developed an aggressive testing program at nearby wells to monitor for ground water contamination to assure the city's water supply meets all drinking water standards.

Human exposure and health issues

- Spokane Regional Health District is evaluating the public health risk that might be present due to petroleum and cleanup products in the environment following the Whitley Fuel fire and the ensuing response on Monday evening.
- People should avoid exposure to breathing petroleum vapors and any contact with oily residues associated with this incident.
- The current risk to public health from petroleum and cleanup products at the site of the Whitley Fuels fire appears to be low. We are continuing to monitor the situation.
- The current risk to public health from petroleum and cleanup products entering the city's stormwater system and the Spokane River appears to be low; however, we are still investigating the situation.
- Spokane Regional Health District recommends that people avoid swimming, fishing or other water recreation in the lower portion of the Spokane River, below the outfall, until further notice.
- People living in the vicinity of the Whitley Fuel fire are asked to move their vehicles to allow the city street maintenance crews to clean up residual runoff along the streets and curbs.

Stormwater drain cleanup

- The City of Spokane Wastewater Management Department is in the second day of a week-long process of "hydro-cleaning" the stormwater system. This means that large vacuums will clean the water out of the pipes and a de-greasing agent will be used to wash the pipe.
- So far the city has cleaned the storm drain from Pittsburg Street and North Foothills Drive – the site of Monday's fire – to approximately Hogan Street and Jackson Avenue.
- According to city wastewater officials, no oil was visible in the pipes being cleaned, however, test results will affirm or not if oil was present and at what concentrations.
- Citizens can help protect the Spokane River by avoiding major water use, such as power-washing equipment, washing cars in their yards, excessive watering – any kind of water use that can flow to storm drains in the area of Mission Avenue to Francis Avenue in North Spokane.

Outfall near T.J. Meenach Bridge

- Sandbags have been placed at the storm drain outfall and three layers of absorbent "boom" (long, absorbent pads) and an oil containment boom have been placed where water from the outfall enters the Spokane River. Only a small amount of oily sheen has been captured inside the absorbent materials.

Spokane River activities

- Crews have one Department of Fish and Wildlife boat out on the river and are currently conducting a survey to determine if there is any petroleum contamination along the river shoreline.
- During a second helicopter over-flight conducted yesterday, Ecology and private cleanup contractors observed what appeared to be patches of oily "sheen" in several areas in the river near the Nine Mile Dam.
- Crews are taking samples to characterize the substances seen from the air and determine if any contain petroleum and can be recovered.

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