

Department of Ecology News Release – Nov. 2, 2007

07-Spill 1

Spill Update: Sunset Drive storm drain gasoline leak

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Sunset Drive gasoline leak investigation continues

City of Bellingham public works and public safety officials and state Department of Ecology responders are continuing work today to identify and isolate the source of gasoline fumes that have been found in a storm drain on Sunset Drive near Barkely Boulevard.

A Chevron gas station is taking steps to determine whether its facilities are leaking gasoline, and if so to prevent gasoline from moving off the property.

Fire officials say the threat of explosion is minimal and there is little risk to public safety. City and state officials and the gas station's contractor have formed a unified command to monitor the situation and ensure prompt actions are taken if needed. They expect monitoring and related operations to continue through the weekend.

The City fire department stabilized one small area that had high gasoline vapor concentrations with foam fire retardant on Thursday and again today. The fire department also put foam fire retardant on two other small areas in the vicinity today.

The station owner today removed all fuel remaining in the facility's underground tanks. The station has been closed for scheduled maintenance since Oct. 15. Public Works personnel continue to monitor the stormwater system.

Today, contractors hired by the station owners are expected to begin more extensive underground soil investigation by digging test holes throughout the site. Further actions Friday night and during the weekend will be determined from the results of this afternoon's testing.

The sidewalk and a bus stop near the station are closed along with an adjacent drive-through coffee business. They are expected to remain closed for the weekend.

Station owners, are cooperating fully with local and state officials to ensure public safety and minimize environmental damage from the gasoline.

Ecology and city officials will review and approve the station owner's plans to ensure that gasoline leak response and remediation efforts are conducted in a manner that protects public safety and the environment.

Last month, City Public Works crews sealed off an inactive sewer line under Sunset along the same block after discovering gasoline there. Ecology and the City are working to determine whether the earlier sewer line incident, the odors reported last month at the Squalicum Creek outfall, and this week's action involving the storm drains are related.

Information about joint efforts to address these incidents will continue to be provided to the media and posted at an Ecology website set up for this purpose:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/incidents/Sunset%20Storm%20Drain/SunsetStormDrain.html>

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