



Spill Update: Whitley Fire and Petroleum Spill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 25, 2007
12:30 p.m./Release # 1

Joint Information Center: 509-990-9177

Environmental contact: Jani Gilbert, Department of Ecology, 509-990-9177

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

Spill Status Report as of 12:30 p.m.

Date of spill: July 23, 2007

Responsible Party: Whitley Oil LLC

Location: Whitley Oil, Pittsburg Road, Spokane

Type of petroleum products: mixed (includes motor oil, diesel fuel, racing fuel, hydraulic and transmission fluid, lubricating oil, and wide range of other substances)

Amount spilled: Unknown (amount to be determined)

Cause or source of the spill: Fire – cause under investigation

Organizations involved: Washington Department of Ecology, City of Spokane Water Department, Whitley Oil, and private environmental contractors.

Update

Fire danger: Fire danger is over. However, the Spokane Fire Department is on standby. An investigation into the cause of the fire continues today.

Safety: Barrier tape will be placed around the area at the stormwater outfall at T.J. Meenach Bridge to prevent citizens from coming into contact with petroleum products in case more of it is flushed to the outfall and into the river. Security personnel will be at the Whitley Oil site to ensure no one interferes with the investigation, and to ensure no one is injured in the debris.

Today's activities/priorities:

- Crews will continue to monitor any runoff from the Whitley Oil site. The city will begin today a seven-day 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. Plugs have been placed in the system to prevent any further contamination of the river.

- In case petroleum products do get through to the Spokane River, absorbent “boom” (long, absorbent pads) and oil containment boom have been placed at the outfall to catch any oil and other products and contain them so they can be cleaned up and avoid flowing down the river. Today that boom will be reinforced by additional material.
- A second over-flight by helicopter will be conducted today in order to scan the river for patches of oily “sheen” (which are generally only molecules thick and mostly impossible to recover) or for “pockets” of petroleum products along the shoreline between T.J. Meenach Bridge and Nine Mile Dam. The over-flight is scheduled for noon. Avista is monitoring for petroleum products at Nine Mile Dam.
- Ecology will continue today to assess environmental damage and try to determine how much petroleum product was lost as a result of Monday’s fire.
- A disposal plan for the contaminated water and oily waste will be developed today. Debris, as it is examined and cleaned up, will go to the Waste-to-Energy Plant.
- Petroleum products in a grassy swale near the Whitley Oil site have been excavated to protect a nearby city drinking-water well. The environmental status of the swale will continue to be monitored. The swale will be covered to avoid future precipitation from pushing any remaining contamination down to the groundwater.

###