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Major Progress Made in Containing and Cleaning Up Arthur Kill Fuel Spill Caused by Sandy

Monday, November 12, 2012

Tags: [Hurricane Sandy](#)

Christie Administration Lauds Coordinated Effort

Trenton, NJ – Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin today praised the well-coordinated response by a dedicated team of public and private groups to a major diesel fuel spill in the Arthur Kill caused by Hurricane Sandy, saying it limited what could have been major environmental damage to the waterway and surrounding areas.

A record tidal surge caused by the storm dislodged and at least one massive bulk fuel tank belonging to the Motiva Oil Tank Facility in the Sewaren section of Woodbridge Township, spilling some 378,000 gallons of low sulfur diesel fuel – including approximately 277,000 gallons that escaped a containment area and entered the Arthur Kill, which is the tidal strait and navigational channel that separates New Jersey and Staten Island.

An intensive cleanup and containment effort was initiated immediately after the storm subsided, coordinated by the U.S. Coast Guard, working closely with Motiva and its contractors, Atlantic Response and Marine Spill Response Corp., as well as the DEP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the city of Woodbridge and Tri-State Bird Rescue to promptly deal with the spill.

As of today, the response group has collected approximately 100,000 gallons of diesel fuel that escaped the containment area, and is continuing fuel recovery and remediation efforts. Also, an unknown percentage of the fuel in the Arthur Kill and Raritan Bay has dissipated.

"In the midst of this very difficult situation across our state and region, the efforts of this team prevented what could have been a major environmental disaster," said Commissioner Martin. "Their professional response as a coordinated unit has been outstanding, limiting the damage and expediting the continuing cleanup."

"Representatives from the Coast Guard and our unified response team have worked closely with the Motiva facility during their cleanup operations," said Coast Guard Cmdr. Eric Doucette, who is the Federal On Scene Coordinator for the Hurricane Sandy Pollution Response. "The facility's professional, proactive cleanup operation has enabled our response teams to focus their efforts to the pollution and hazardous substances in the communities affected by the storm."

More than 200 responders utilized some 18,000 feet of containment boom, 14 oil skimmers, 9 vacuum trucks, 3 shallow water barges, 18 work boats, and tons of absorbent materials to recover diesel fuel that had spilled within Motiva's containment area and in the waterways at Woodbridge Creek, Smith Creek and the Arthur Kill Channel, close to the terminal docks.

Continued assessments are being conducted by boat on the Arthur Kill to locate any more recoverable fuel. The Coast Guard is continuing to conduct over flights in the area to assess the impact of any remaining fuel, while the DEP is conducting additional air monitoring in residential areas surrounding the Woodbridge and Smith creeks. No elevated readings for volatile organic compounds have been found, though there are still some residual odors in the area.

The DEP is now focusing on remediation efforts in Smith Creek and also the south dock of the Motiva terminal in an effort to facilitate its usage.

Responders are continuing to work closely with Tri-State Bird Rescue of Newark, Delaware. So far, they have rescued nine oiled birds. At least two of those birds have died and the others are being rehabilitated.

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