

## **EPA update: Des Plaines River oil spill**

(Chicago, Ill. - Feb. 9, 2009) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5, with support from Illinois EPA and the U.S Coast Guard Ninth District Marine Safety Unit responded to a waste oil release from Caterpillar's Joliet, Ill. facility, early Sunday afternoon. The government agencies, Caterpillar and contractors worked through the night. The spill is now being contained and cleanup efforts are under way.

The release occurred when an electric pump in the facility's waste oil/water separation system failed on Sunday morning. Two waste oil collection pits about 100 feet from the Des Plaines River soon overflowed. Approximately 65,000 gallons of waste oil overflowed the collection pits. About 10 percent (6,000 to 6,500 gallons) flowed down a 150-foot embankment and into the river. The rest of the oil collected in a gravel parking area and on the embankment.

Barge traffic on the river was halted for most of the day on Sunday to enable response teams to get to work. Light river surface "sheening" was spotted as far as three miles downstream from the Caterpillar facility.

As of early morning today, five high-powered vacuum trucks had been deployed to collect surface spills from the parking lot and embankment. Waste oil in the river is now being contained with a series of booms, which will then be vacuumed out.

A Coast Guard helicopter survey on Sunday showed no observable fish kills or ecological impacts. A second survey overflight will be conducted today. EPA and natural resource agencies will begin conducting comprehensive shoreline and embankment assessments today, which include a closer look at impacts on animals and aquatic life.

The cleanup effort is expected to last through Wednesday or Thursday.

Photos from the cleanup are posted on EPA Region 5's website:

<http://www.epa.gov/region5/news/features/desplainesriver-oilspill.html>.