9/2/17
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EPA Statement on ASPECT Monitoring and Water Quality Sampling at Arkema Facility
On Friday, Sept. 1, an EPA emergency response surveillance aircraft flew through the fire at the Arkema plant in Crosby, Texas. The ASPECT aircraft monitored for any possible airborne toxic chemicals and also obtained imagery of the fire and facility. In addition to monitoring the air in the vicinity of Arkema, EPA collected surface water runoff samples downstream of the facility at four locations near a residential area.

Results of ground air monitoring outside the exclusion zone were below levels of health concern. Surface water runoff results were less than the screening levels that would warrant further investigation. Each flood water sample was analyzed for volatile organic chemicals and semi-volatile organic chemicals likely to come from the Arkema plant. EPA will continue to take additional samples of Hurricane Harvey flood water in the vicinity of the Arkema Plant to document changes in the concentration of chemicals, and will maintain a 24-hour presence at the incident command operations center.

It is important to note that chemical analysis alone cannot be used as an indication of water safety. In a flood situation, there are multiple risk factors that can cause harm, industrial chemicals are only one of those risk factors.

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Surface water runoff results were less than the screening levels that would warrant further investigation for all chemicals sampled with the exception of (chemical name) and (chemical name). Each flood water sample was analyzed for volatile organic chemicals and semi-volatile organic chemicals likely to come from the Arkema plant. EPA will continue to take additional samples of Hurricane Harvey flood water in the vicinity of the Arkema Plant to document changes in the concentration of chemicals, and will maintain a 24-hour presence at the incident command operations center.

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Background:
The EPA ASPECT Program is the nation's only 24/7/365 emergency airborne platform equipped with special chemical, radiological, and situational awareness instruments. ASPECT stands for Airborne Spectral Photometric Environment Collection Technology. It detects chemicals and radiation while collecting aerial photos and videos for situational awareness during an emergency (night or day). Critical information is automatically processed in the aircraft and transmitted via satellite to a team of highly skilled scientists who quickly review it before sending the information to decision makers on the ground. This can be done within five minutes. Because of its ability to quickly arrive onsite and turn-around data, ASPECT serves as an initial screening tool to help the field responders make more informed decisions based on actual measurements. ASPECT does not fly through the hazard. All the information is collected from a safe distance away from the hazard using remote sensing technologies. It usually flies at about 3,000 feet above the ground, but can fly much lower (or higher) if needed. A crew of four fly and operate the aircraft. Teams utilizing the ASPECT Program vary depending on the type and scale of an emergency, and can provide support at the command post or from anywhere in the world via satellite communications and secure internet coordination.