Message

From: Eoc, Epahq [Eoc.Epahq@epa.gov]
Sent: 12/6/2019 1:15:35 AM
Subject: EOC Spot Report: Region 6, Explosion at TPC Group Facility in Port Neches, TX - Update #12

This report is being sent as a bcc to prevent accidental Reply to All messages.

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

EOC Spot Report: Region 6, Explosion at TPC Group Facility in Port Neches, TX - Update #12

PORT NECHES, TX, NRC#1264987

US Environmental Protection Agency
Report as of 12/05/2019 8:15 PM

Overview: Early in the morning on November 27, the National Response Center received a report about an explosion at TPC Group Facility in Port Neches, TX. The facility is regulated under the Risk Management Program. At approximately 1400 CST on November 27, a secondary explosion occurred. Residents within a four-mile radius of the facility were ordered to evacuate. At 1000 hours on November 29, the Jefferson County judge rescinded the mandatory evacuation. As of 1830 hours on December 3, the remaining fire self-extinguished in the process area. On December 4, TPC paused the application of water to Tank 25 to evaluate the structural integrity of the tank to plan changing the damaged release valves. At approximately 1730, concentrations exceeding the action level for 1,3-butadiene were reported in the community. On December 5, TPC secured the release valve on Tank 25. The concentrations of 1,3-Butadiene in the community were reduced to an average of 0.168 ppm. As of 0600 on December 5, Outfall 201 continued to overflow as the water applied to Tank 25 collects and drains to this outfall. TPC utilized two pumps to divert the water toward the water collection area.

TPC continues responding to reports and recovering debris from the explosions. To date, TPC reports approximately 41 homes have reported debris concerns on their properties to the TPC hotline.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: On December 4 at 1800 after confirmation of sustained measurements and notification to local authorities, the Port Neches Fire Chief issued a shelter in place order for the City of Port Neches. At 2200, The Jefferson County Judge issued a voluntary evacuation order for the City of Port Neches. The voluntary evacuation and shelter in place orders were lifted at 1230 on December 5, following consistent air monitoring measurements below the action level. Schools in Port Neches-Groves Independent School District will be out of session on Thursday December 5, and Friday December 6.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) mobilized on December 5, to provide on-site support for reviewing data and communicating observations and human health concerns to the community.

EPA Actions: EPA is serving as the lead federal agency for response efforts. As December 5, there are four EPA personnel onsite supporting the response. A Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) team continued assessments on December 5 along the 201 Canal and Star Lake Canal. The SCAT team's findings will be developed into a clean-up action plan as determined to be necessary. EPA has mobilized an asbestos specialist to advise on asbestos clean-up activities. On December 5, EPA collected 5 surface water samples in the affected canal up to the Neches River and 1 surface water sample upstream of the incident. EPA's Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT) conducted a fly-over of the site on the morning of December 5 and reported a detection of ethylene. This detection could be attributed to operations at neighboring facilities.

A Story Map has been created for the incident and is public at the https://response.epa.gov/south4groupfire website.

Media Interest: Medium

Media Links:
https://www.wsj.com/articles/texas-town-under-voluntary-evacuation-order-after-chemical-plant-explosions-11575558870
https://www.texastribune.org/2019/12/05/port-neches-plant-explosion-prompts-evacuation-order-one-week-later/
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chemicals-fire-tpc-portneches/new-evacuation-order-for-texas-city-hit-by-explosion-chemical-fire-idUSKBN1Y90DK

The EPA will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Peter Oh, Senior Watch Officer
U.S Environmental Protection Agency
Headquarters Emergency Operations Center
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20460
202-564-3850
eoc.epahq@epa.gov