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EOC Spot Report: Chemical Spill, Charleston WV – Update #12

US Environmental Protection Agency

Report as of 1600 January 15, 2014

Overview: On January 10, the President approved an Emergency Declaration for the State of West Virginia after a chemical leaked at a Freedom Industries chemical plant and into the Elk River in Charleston, WV. The spill occurred near the Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant which detected the chemical even after an increased carbon treatment effort was put in place. Freedom Industries is working to clean up the spill at the facility and in the river.

State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions: West Virginia water authorities have issued a "Do Not Use Water Notice" for 10 counties and the President's Emergency Declaration covers eight counties. West Virginia American Water Company (WVAWC) customers are told not to use tap water for drinking, cooking, washing, or bathing. Water can be used for toilets and fire emergencies. This has impact 300,000 people.

The WVAWC has lifted the drinking water use restrictions in more zones this morning, advising customers that they can use water for all purposes after flushing their plumbing systems. WVAWC reports that more than 51,000 customers (more than 50% of their approximately 100,000 customers, and more than half of the 300,000 persons served by the system) can now use their water for all purposes.

EPA has received some reports from the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) sampling in the Elk and Ohio Rivers. ORSANCO reports that the leading edge of the plume was detected at 9:00 pm on January 14th at Meldahl Locks and Dam, at Ohio River mile 436.

A representative from the US Fish & Wildlife arrived today to collect information for a possible Natural Resource Damage Assessment. His primary concern is mussels.

The morning meeting was conducted with the following staff: EPA, WVDEP, CSB, USCG, OSHA, USF&W, the facility, the facility's contractor, Attorney General representative, and USCG. A primary concern was the water collecting in the secondary containment of the tank farm. The facility directed their contractor to pump this water into vacuum trucks. In addition, water for the interceptor trench continues to be pumped directly into vacuum trucks.

The facility tested the water emerging from the storm drain area and preliminary results detected fluorine in the water. The water company believes that the area has a broken pipe that they are currently preparing to repair. The repair should diminish the flow of water emerging at the storm drain area.

The facility also deployed boom in accordance with USCG's strategy that WVDEP and EPA approved. WVDEP requested that additional horizontal booms (absorbent) be placed inside the hard boom, which the facility agreed to complete. USCG removed the three mile safety zone restriction in the river. Commercial traffic will receive a broadcast alerting traffic of the boom at the facility.

The facility's contractor will punch test holes into the area surrounding the tanks to investigate the presence of product. If the product is detected in certain areas, sumps will be dug to vacuum the product out and transfer it into tanker trucks. It was decided that the empty MCHM tanks will not be cut up or removed from the site until the product is removed. EPA's contractor is producing a map depicting the deployed boom, interceptor trench, liner, culvert area, and hydro-punch locations.

EPA Actions: EPA, WVDEP, and USCG, approved the facility's proposal to install a French Drain along the base of the slope. The drain will run along the base of the slope to the lowest point beneath the liner. The pipe will have two or three lines, which will lead directly to vacuum trucks. Excavated dirt resulting from the drain installation will be stored in a lined roll-off located on site and will undergo testing for disposal. In addition, silt fence will be installed along the base of the slope to prevent erosion of soils into the river.

Media Interest: High

The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provide updates as needed.

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