region6news

Wednesday, September 06, 2017

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations

Please note: All articles are available in the attached PDF.
To receive the Daily News Digest in your inbox, email R6Press@epa.gov.

Hurricane coverage:

1 — Air monitors detect cancer-causing compound as environmental concerns grow in east Harris County, Houston Chronicle, 9/5/2017
http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Air-monitors-detect-cancer-causing-compound-as-12175440.php
Independent air monitors have detected a plume of cancer-causing benzene near homes and businesses outside a Valero Energy oil refinery in east Houston, raising concerns among environmentalists and city officials who say the compound is nearly twice the state limits for short-term exposure.

2 — Gov. Abbott: Superfund sites don't pose danger at this time, Houston Business Journal, 9/5/2017
https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2017/09/05/gov-abbott-superfund-sites-don-t-pose-danger-at.html
EPA Superfund sites in Texas currently don't pose a danger to the public, despite flooding from Harvey, Gov. Greg Abbott said at a press conference Sept. 5.

3 — State, federal officials still checking toxic sites flooded by Harvey, San Antonio Express-News, 9/5/2017
http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/State-federal-officials-still-checking-toxic-12174416.php
Gov. Abbott said he has assurances from federal officials that none of the 11 affected Superfund sites still to be checked by the Environmental Protection Agency "pose any damage or danger to the public that is known at this time."

4 — Authorities warn of possible spill at Cinco Ranch wastewater treatment facility, Houston Chronicle, 9/6/2017
http://www.chron.com/neighborhood/katy/news/article/Authories-warn-of-possible-spill-at-Cinco-Ranch-12176317.php
Authorities warned residents near Cinco South Wastewater Treatment Plant who have private wells that their drinking water might be contaminated after a possible spill at the plant.

5 — County officials help residents with water well samples, tetanus vaccines, Brazoria Facts, 9/5/2017
http://thefacts.com/news/article_af180156-bda6-583c-aebb-a2ff0b2c2caf.html
As efforts to rebuild have slowly begun in areas hit hard by Hurricane Harvey, officials continue to warn of lingering environmental hazards, including the health risks posed by receding floodwater.

6 — Lack of water service adds to woes of residents of flood-swollen Beaumont, Houston Chronicle, 9/5/2017
http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/texas/article/Lack-of-water-service-adds-to-woes-of-residents-12175393.php
Harvey's floodwaters had receded from many homes and streets here in Beaumont, but the going remained tough for residents.

7— EDITORIAL: In Crosby, the lessons of West go unheeded, Dallas Morning News, 9/5/17

https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/2017/09/05/crosby-lessons-west-go-unheeded
Texas' approach to chemical storage amounts to what you don't know can't hurt you. Unfortunately, this also amounts to trusting without verification, and that's never a good policy.

8 — OPINION: Don't Be Surprised by the Explosion Near Houston. We've Cut Corners on Chemical Safety for Years., Fortune, 9/5/17
http://fortune.com/2017/09/05/houston-chemical-plant-fire-explosion-arkema-crosby/
While we can't prevent natural disasters like Harvey from occurring, we can mitigate their consequences. Inherently unsafe facilities and operations can be redesigned, retrofitted, and ultimately replaced by manufacturing and storage facility changes that are safer.

9 — This Unique EPA Plane Is Monitoring Toxic Waste Dumps Around Houston, The Drive, 9/5/17
http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/14088/this-unique-epa-plane-is-monitoring-toxic-waste-dumps-around-houston
As part of its response, the EPA has deployed the unique Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology surveillance aircraft, which can spot chemical and radiological material from the air, to help assess the situation.

10— Hurricane Irma slams Caribbean islands as it heads toward Puerto Rico, CNN, 9/6/17
http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/06/us/hurricane-irma-puerto-rico-florida/index.html
Four of the strongest buildings on the Caribbean island of St. Martin have been destroyed by Hurricane Irma, French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said at a news conference Wednesday.

Other news:

11— Carrizozo hauls in bottled water when sulfate level spikes, Ruisdoso (NM) News, 9/6/17
http://www.ruidosonews.com/story/news/local/community/2017/09/05/carrizozo-hauls-bottled-water-when-sulfate-level-spikes/633756001/
Residents of Carrizozo were alerted last Friday that a high level of calcium sulfate was detected in the town's water system.

12— EDITORIAL: Why Dallas must use Hurricane Harvey as a catalyst for responsible growth, Dallas Morning News, 9/6/17
https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/2017/09/05/dallas-must-use-hurricane-harvey-catalyst-responsible-growth
Dallas officials are confident the Trinity River levees won't break and cause the kind of massive flooding Houston suffered. But this city has seen much flash flooding.

13— Seed-firm suers told to file in Missouri, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 9/6/17
http://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2017/sep/06/seed-firm-suers-told-to-file-in-missour/?f=latest
Arkansas farmers who planted Monsanto's dicamba-tolerant crops, then sued the company this summer, will have to take their case to Monsanto's home turf in Missouri.

14— Tropical Storm Katia strengthens in Gulf; Jose expected to become hurricane by Wednesday night, Baton Rouge Advocate, 9/6/17
http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/weather_traffic/article_548bf792-92fb-11e7-a238-478833767cf9.html
On Wednesday morning, a new tropical storm formed in the Gulf of Mexico off Mexico's coast, the National Hurricane Center said. At 10 a.m. Wednesday, Tropical Storm Katia had maximum sustained winds of 45 mph and was expected

to strengthen. Another tropical storm farther east in the Atlantic was expected to become a hurricane by Wednesday night. Tropical Storm Jose's maximum sustained winds had increased to 70 mph.

15— Edmond issues water statement after odor, taste inquiries, The Oklahoman, 9/6/17
http://newsok.com/edmond-issues-water-statement-after-odor-taste-inquiries/article/5562899
After numerous residents inquired about the odor and taste of Edmond's water, the city issued a statement Tuesday stating the water is safe for consumption

region6news

Wednesday, September 06, 2017

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and 66 Tribal Nations

Please note: All articles are available in the attached PDF.
To receive the Daily News Digest in your inbox, email R6Press@epa.gov.

Hurricane coverage:

1 — Air monitors detect cancer-causing compound as environmental concerns grow in east Harris County, Houston Chronicle, 9/5/2017
http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Air-monitors-detect-cancer-causing-compound-as-12175440.php
Independent air monitors have detected a plume of cancer-causing benzene near homes and businesses outside a Valero Energy oil refinery in east Houston, raising concerns among environmentalists and city officials who say the compound is nearly twice the state limits for short-term exposure.

2 — Gov. Abbott: Superfund sites don't pose danger at this time, Houston Business Journal, 9/5/2017
https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2017/09/05/gov-abbott-superfund-sites-don-t-pose-danger-at.html
EPA Superfund sites in Texas currently don't pose a danger to the public, despite flooding from Harvey, Gov. Greg Abbott said at a press conference Sept. 5.

3 — State, federal officials still checking toxic sites flooded by Harvey, San Antonio Express-News, 9/5/2017
http://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/State-federal-officials-still-checking-toxic-12174416.php
Gov. Abbott said he has assurances from federal officials that none of the 11 affected Superfund sites still to be checked by the Environmental Protection Agency "pose any damage or danger to the public that is known at this time."

4 — Authorities warn of possible spill at Cinco Ranch wastewater treatment facility, Houston Chronicle, 9/6/2017
http://www.chron.com/neighborhood/katy/news/article/Authories-warn-of-possible-spill-at-Cinco-Ranch-12176317.php
Authorities warned residents near Cinco South Wastewater Treatment Plant who have private wells that their drinking water might be contaminated after a possible spill at the plant.

5 — County officials help residents with water well samples, tetanus vaccines, Brazoria Facts, 9/5/2017
http://thefacts.com/news/article_af180156-bda6-583c-aebb-a2ff0b2c2caf.html
As efforts to rebuild have slowly begun in areas hit hard by Hurricane Harvey, officials continue to warn of lingering environmental hazards, including the health risks posed by receding floodwater.

6 — Lack of water service adds to woes of residents of flood-swollen Beaumont, Houston Chronicle, 9/5/2017
http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/texas/article/Lack-of-water-service-adds-to-woes-of-residents-12175393.php
Harvey's floodwaters had receded from many homes and streets here in Beaumont, but the going remained tough for residents.

7— EDITORIAL: In Crosby, the lessons of West go unheeded, Dallas Morning News, 9/5/17

https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/2017/09/05/crosby-lessons-west-go-unheeded
Texas' approach to chemical storage amounts to what you don't know can't hurt you. Unfortunately, this also amounts to trusting without verification, and that's never a good policy.

8 — OPINION: Don't Be Surprised by the Explosion Near Houston. We've Cut Corners on Chemical Safety for Years., Fortune, 9/5/17
http://fortune.com/2017/09/05/houston-chemical-plant-fire-explosion-arkema-crosby/
While we can't prevent natural disasters like Harvey from occurring, we can mitigate their consequences. Inherently unsafe facilities and operations can be redesigned, retrofitted, and ultimately replaced by manufacturing and storage facility changes that are safer.

9 — This Unique EPA Plane Is Monitoring Toxic Waste Dumps Around Houston, The Drive, 9/5/17
http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/14088/this-unique-epa-plane-is-monitoring-toxic-waste-dumps-around-houston
As part of its response, the EPA has deployed the unique Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology surveillance aircraft, which can spot chemical and radiological material from the air, to help assess the situation.

10— Hurricane Irma slams Caribbean islands as it heads toward Puerto Rico, CNN, 9/6/17
http://www.cnn.com/2017/09/06/us/hurricane-irma-puerto-rico-florida/index.html
Four of the strongest buildings on the Caribbean island of St. Martin have been destroyed by Hurricane Irma, French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said at a news conference Wednesday.

Chron
http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Air-monitors-detect-cancer-causing-compound-as-12175440.php

Air monitors detect cancer-causing compound as environmental concerns grow in east Harris County

By Jordan Blum and Lise Olsen **Updated 10:22 pm, Tuesday, September 5, 2017**

A teenage girl walks around the track of a park across the street from the Valero refinery Monday, Aug. 4, 2014, in the Manchester neighborhood of Houston. (AP Photo/Pat Sullivan)

Independent air monitors have detected a plume of cancer-causing benzene near homes and businesses outside a Valero Energy oil refinery in east Houston, raising concerns among environmentalists and city officials who say the compound is nearly twice the state limits for short-term exposure.

The highest concentration was detected in an area near Manchester Street and 96th Street close to the refinery, which voluntarily reported an oil spill at the plant earlier this week in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, according to the Environmental Defense Fund, which worked with California-based Entanglement Technologies to measure the benzene levels.

Benzene is a carcinogenic component of crude oil and gasoline. Breathing it in can cause dizziness, headaches and even unconsciousness.

"It is alarming to see high levels of a dangerous pollutant go unnoticed by the Houston region's existing network of air quality monitors," Elena Craft, senior health scientist for Environmental Defense Fund, said Tuesday.

The reports come amid growing environmental concerns over the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, one of 13 Superfund sites in Texas that flooded during Hurricane Harvey. Environmentalists called Tuesday for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide additional information about whether dioxin escaped from the pits into the floodwaters.

ADVERTISEMENT

Related Stories

Tomlinson: Houston needs petrochemicals more than ever

Crosby evacuees return venting ire aimed at Arkema

Arkema destroys final chemical containers

Questions remain, as well, about chemical fires at the Arkema plant in Crosby east of Houston and last week's emergency shelter-in-place warning in La Porte following a chemical pipeline leak.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott temporarily suspended requirements that certain spills and emissions be reported to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality during the storm and its aftermath, allowing energy and chemical companies to file reports voluntarily.

In the Houston area, companies have reported releasing more than 2 million pounds of carbon monoxide and other chemicals into the region's atmosphere during facility shutdowns, according to TCEQ filings.

ADVERTISEMENT

Voluntary reports

On Aug. 27, San Antonio-based Valero reported a temporary leak from a partially collapsed roof of a storage tank caused by "heavy rainfall complications with Hurricane Harvey" by its Houston refinery. Valero estimated 6.7 pounds of benzene were released, as well more than 3,350 pounds of unspecified volatile compounds.

Valero spokeswoman Lillian Riojas said Tuesday that Valero crew members quickly contained the oil after it leaked from the roof drain at the refinery. She said the U.S. Coast Guard inspected the clean-up, and that Valero is working with TCEQ and the EPA "on monitoring for any potential emissions from the oil."

EPA spokesman David Gray said Tuesday the agency is conducting air monitoring and "focusing on an area of potential concern associated with reported air emissions from a Valero facility in Houston," but that none of the EPA readings rose above emergency screening levels. The EPA was conducting more monitoring in the area Tuesday, but had not yet released those results.

Just this week, however, the city of Houston and environmental groups began conducting independent air monitoring separate from the state and federal government. Although data is still being collected, the Environmental Defense Fund said the amount of benzene detected on Monday — 324 parts per billion — is nearly double the state's allowable amount of 180 parts per billion.

Luke Metzger, director of the advocacy group Environment Texas, is concerned the state and EPA are relying too much on companies to self-report.

"It's likely the first of many to come," Metzger said of the detections near the Valero refinery. "Now we also have independent air monitoring, but it's hard to trace to individual companies."

Metzger noted problems with "unbearable smells" in Pasadena after Houston-based Kinder Morgan reported a Harvey-related spill of petroleum products on Aug. 27 at its terminal. Kinder Morgan acknowledged the release of benzene and other potentially toxic compounds.

But the company took issue with Metzger's description.

"That assertion is difficult to believe because we set up an exclusion zone to keep the public safely away, covered the small release with a foam blanket to control emissions, and employed constant air monitoring to ensure that the blanket was effective," Kinder Morgan spokesman Dave Conover said Tuesday.

Waste pits worries

At the San Jacinto waste pits, meanwhile, advocates continue to push for information about the potential release of dioxin and other cancer'causing industrial waste that was stored in there in the 1960s.

The current owners of the site paid to cap the waste pits, but the caps have leaked and been repaired and replaced several times.

Scott Jones, of the Galveston Bay Foundation, said dioxin has already leached from the site in older flood events, creating hot spots in sediments in the river and in Galveston Bay.

He said the state has failed to properly monitor the site because of inadequate resources. The EPA and TCEQ officials have said the cap appears to be holding, based on preliminary inspections of the waste pits by boat and land.

Separate reviews were conducted Friday by a contractor and Monday by federal and state officials, who said they would inspect the cap more thoroughly when river conditions allow.

The cancer-causing dioxin and other wastes were byproducts from a nearby paper mill.

The EPA has said the waste pits were one of 13 Superfund sites in Texas that flooded during Hurricane Harvey and could be damaged. About half of those sites so far have been visited by inspectors who performed preliminary checks for damage, according to the TCEQ and the EPA. They promise to do more checks when the floodwater recedes.

Abbott said Tuesday at a news conference in Austin that officials "are unaware of any damage or danger that has occurred."

Several homes in the Channelview river bottom nearest the pits were blown off their foundations when the river rose over its banks. Four houses floated away and several others sunk into enormous sinkholes that formed in the floods.

Channelview resident Jennifer Harpster said she and her neighbors were continuing to clean up Tuesday despite their fears of tainted water.

"When you go down there, it looks like a bomb went off." she said. "The smell of chemicals is inside my house."

Harpster is the lead plaintiff in a civil lawsuit in which 600 people claim their lives and livelihood have been damaged by the waste pits. She believes dioxins have already affected her family's health — her granddaughter died of a rare form of cancer at age 6.

A plan to remove the wastes from the river entirely remains under consideration by the EPA.

Activist Jackie Young, who grew up in nearby Highlands and is the founder of the grassroots Texas Health and Environment Alliance, wants to see the pits removed as soon as possible.

"Harvey was not a routine event. Let's stop kicking this can to future generations," Young said. "We need the waste pits removed in a controlled, engineered environment, not in a hurricane."

Pam Bonta, with the nonprofit Texas Quality Water, said she's worried about 6,000 households that depend on well water and are located in the flood plain around the pits in the Harris County communities of Channelview, Highlands and on the Lynchburg peninsula.

TCEQ and county officials say they'll continue to provide updates.

"TCEQ and EPA toxicologists and technical experts are on the ground and in the air collecting real-time air monitoring and water quality data," EPA officials said Monday. "That information is being analyzed by experts now and will be provided to the public as

soon as it is available. We encourage the community to continue to follow the expert safety advice of local officials."

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.

HEARST

Gov. Abbott: Superfund sites don't pose danger at this time

Sep 5, 2017, 12:32pm CDT

INDUSTRIES & TAGS Energy

SHARE Order Reprints Save Article Print

Get Houston Newsletters and Alerts
Morning Edition >> Afternoon Edition >> Breaking News

Enter your email address

Sign Up

Olivia Pulsinelli

Senior web editor
Houston Business Journal

EPA Superfund sites in Texas currently don't pose a danger to the public, despite flooding from Harvey, Gov. Greg Abbott said at a press conference Sept. 5.

Reporters with the Dallas Morning Newsand KVUE in Austin tweeted his statement from the press conference. He had just received a briefing on Texas' Harvey recovery, per KVUE's Jay Wallis.

RELATED CONTENT

Houston Business Journal's Harvey coverage

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott

CHRIS KLEPONIS | BLOOMBERG

BIZSPACE SPOTLIGHT

SPONSOR LISTING

Property Spotlight: PV|303 - Arizona's Rising Hub For Business Expansion

See All Bizspace Properties

Over the weekend, the Environmental Protection Agency said it had conducted initial assessments at 41 Superfund sites. Of those, 13 had experienced flooding, though 28 showed no damage, per the EPA's Sept. 2 press release. Those assessments were conducted "using aerial images, as well as direct contact with the parties responsible for on-going cleanup activities," per the release.

Two of those 13 flooded sites — Falcon Refinery and the Brine Service in the Corpus Christi area — have been inspected and do not require emergency cleanup, but additional sampling will continue.

Another 11 sites were not accessible by response personnel as of Sept. 2:

Bailey Waste Disposal

French LTD

Geneva Industries/Fuhrmann Energy

Gulfco Marine

Highland Acid Pit

Malone Services

U.S. Oil Recovery

Patrick Bayou

Petro-Chemical Systems

Triangle Chemical

San Jacinto Waste Pits

At the Sept. 5 press conference, Abbott said federal officials have inspected 33 waste sites in affected areas, the Dallas Morning News reports. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality oversees 17 sites, one of which is flooded, per the Morning News. Inspections cleared another five of concern.

A Superfund site is a contaminated site identified for cleanup by the EPA. The affected sites in Texas are contaminated by industrial waste from petrochemical companies, acid compounds, solvents and pesticides, according to CNN.

State, federal officials still checking toxic sites flooded by Harvey

By Allie Morris, Austin Bureau | September 5, 2017 | Updated: September 5, 2017 9:23pm

0

Photo: Jason Dearen /Associated Press

IMAGE 1 OF 12
Rafael Casas tours his storm-ravaged property in a small working-class neighborhood that sits between two Superfund sites, French Ltd. and the Sikes Disposal Pits, in Crosby, on Friday.

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott said state and federal authorities are still checking all the hazardous waste sites affected by flooding from Harvey.

But Abbott said he has assurances from federal officials that none of the 11 affected Superfund sites still to be checked by the Environmental Protection Agency "pose any damage or danger to the public that is known at this time."

Concerns mounted over the weekend that flooding may have damaged some of the sites and carried away potentially toxic or dangerous chemicals.

Abbott addressed the issue at a media briefing Tuesday, saying the state has inspected five of the 17 state Superfund sites in the Houston area and "no major issues have been noted." One — International Creosoting, a former wood-treatment plant, and later a ready-mix concrete operation — remains flooded, Abbott said.

"We can't say there is any danger or damage, however we can't make any determination at this time," he said at the news conference in the state operations center in Austin.

San Antonio Express-News
As low as $0.99/week
Subscribe

Thirty-three federal Superfund sites are in the affected area, 11 of which need "follow-up action by the EPA to confirm their status," said Abbott, who has been in contact with a regional EPA administrator, but not the agency's director, Scott Pruitt.

The Associated Press reported over the weekend that seven Houston-area Superfund sites had been flooded and the EPA had not yet been able to physically visit the spots. The agency hit back against the story in a statement, saying it had surveilled the sites using aerial imaging and that teams are in place to "investigate possible damage to these sites as soon (as) flood waters recede, and personnel are able to safely access these sites."

The federal agency is working with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to monitor the sites and contain any damage, Abbott said.

The state is relying on the federal government for help in several areas, including controlling mosquitoes to try to stop potential spread of diseases carried by the insects. Costs for spraying within the first 30 days will be covered by the federal government and the Department of Defense will help with "wide-area spray," according to Abbott. Local spraying already has begun, and the state is expected to pitch in this week.

"If we can do an aggressive job containing this in the first 30 days after the storm, we will be able to get it under control," Abbott said.

Congress is expected to vote today on a $7.9 billion aid package for Harvey relief.

"I feel confident that Texas is going to get the resources it needs," Abbott said.

The total storm-related cost is not yet clear, but recovery efforts are underway. All Texas interstates are now open, but 118 roads are still closed. Hospitals affected by the storm are beginning to come back online, with 95 percent of the hospitals in the greater Houston area reported to be functional.

amorris@express-news.net

HEARST newspapers

© 2017 Hearst Communications Inc.

Chron http://www.chron.com/neighborhood/katy/news/article/Authories-warn-of-possible-spill-at-Cinco-Ranch-12176317.php

Authorities warn of possible spill at Cinco Ranch wastewater treatment facility

By Margaret Kadifa **Updated 8:35 am, Wednesday, September 6, 2017**

IMAGE 1 OF 31

Homes in the Cinco Ranch area are surrounded by water from Barker Reservoir, Saturday, September 2, 2017, in Houston.

Authorities warned residents near Cinco South Wastewater Treatment Plant who have private wells that their drinking water might be contaminated after a possible spill at the plant.

Because of flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey, there may have been a spill at the Cinco South Wastewater Treatment Plant, according to a notice sent out by the municipal utility district.

The notice said residents who purchase water from a public water supply may contact their distributor to ensure their water is safe.

Todd Burrer, regional director of Texas MUDs at Severn Trent, clarified Wednesday that the drinking water of all Cinco Ranch residents - including those living in Cinco 1 - has not been affected and is still safe to use.

READ ALSO: Government faces suit over Addicks and Barker dam releases

Residents with a private drinking water supply well within 1/2-mile of the wastewater treatment plant, which is off of South Fry near Westheimer, should distill or boil all of the water that they use, according to the notice.

They should have their well water tested before they stop distilling or

what a difference a week can make

Residents should also avoid touching waste material, soil or water that could be affected by the suspected spill, according to the notice.

Cinco MUD 1 lacked an estimated date or time of the possible spill. The MUD also did not have an estimated volume of the spill.

Residents can contact Todd Burrer at 281-578-4245 with questions.

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.

HEARST

http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/texas/article/Lack-of-water-service-adds-to-woes-of-residents-12175393.php

Lack of water service adds to woes of residents of flood-swollen Beaumont

By Emily Foxhall and Maggie Gordon **Updated 10:59 pm, Tuesday, September 5, 2017**

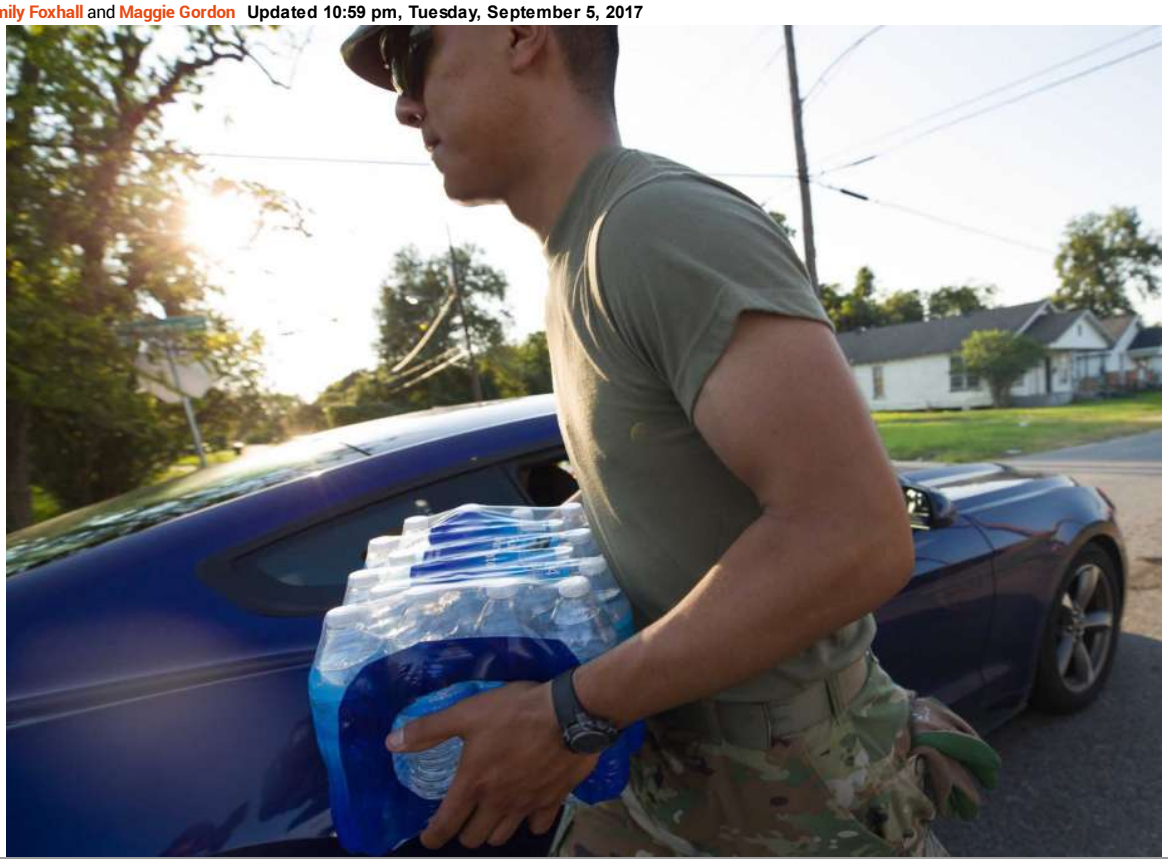


IMAGE 1 OF 5

U.S. Army branch 3-133 soldier Juan Retana loads up a box of bottled water into a motorist's vehicle outside Babe Zaharias Memorial Stadium Monday, Sept. 4 2017, in Beaumont, Texas. Beaumont residents are ... more

BEAUMONT - Tears fell from Corita Young's eyes after her car passed through the pick-up line for a case of bottled water, a sack of ice and a package of 12 Meals Ready to Eat.

Harvey's floodwaters had receded from many homes and streets here in Beaumont, but the going remained tough for residents such as Young. Some areas of her hometown remained submerged. It would take weeks, if not months, for others to be livable.

And, to top it all, residents in the city of roughly 120,000 remained under a boil-water advisory - a factor that kept restaurants shuttered, schools closed and residents worried.

"It's scary. It's hard to manage," said Young, 68. "I was ready for a few days. A month? I don't know."

Related Stories

Hurricane Harvey in photos

Aerial photos show extreme Harvey flooding in Houston

Motiva refinery in Port Arthur begins to roar back after Harvey shutdown

Beaumont, along with the cities of Port Arthur and Orange, make up the "Golden Triangle," a heavily industrial area along Texas' Gulf Coast that was drenched by Harvey's rains last week. The storm made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane northeast of Corpus Christi on Aug. 25, then dumped upwards of 50 inches on Greater Houston before crossing east over the Beaumont area days later as a tropical depression.

ADVERTISEMENT

Exxon Mobil Beaumont refinery reports oil spill

The storm has been blamed for more than 60 deaths, including at least 17 in the Beaumont area. The victims include a 41-year-old mother who drowned in a flood-swollen canal while trying to carry her 3-year-old girl to safety. The child, found clinging to her mother, survived.

In the storm's aftermath, Beaumont is still reeling from the floods. Services shut down for days. Beaumont Baptist Hospital closed its emergency room and began evacuating patients Thursday. And other hospitals have been unable to pick up the slack, as they stretch resources.

"There are almost 3,000 residences and businesses inaccessible, including two apartment buildings," Officer Carol Riley, a spokeswoman for the city's emergency management office, said Monday. "And about 50 streets remain flooded."

ADVERTISEMENT

Homes damaged by flooding were easy to spot Tuesday, with piles of discarded items out front. The city smelled like wet carpet, as one state representative put it.

"It seemed like everything that could go wrong was going wrong," said Haley Morrow, public information officer for the Beaumont police. "We hope it never happens again."

For Albertina Warren, the storm left everything she had heavy and wet with water. And still, there was nothing for her to drink.

"The rain came on Wednesday," Warren recalled Monday, though she had trouble keeping the days straight.

But she remembered watching it pool on her street when she heard the news on the television: The floodgates at the dam upstream from her home were being opened.

"They told everyone on this end of town that they needed to move, get out the way, because it was going to flood," she said. "We went outside and the water was already up to our ankles."

She ran as best she could, sloshing across the street to her mother's house. She began knocking on neighbors' doors - they needed to get out. The family loaded into a truck and went to Warren's sister's house.

"There was like 30 of us in her house," she said. "But we were dry there."

By the time she returned the following morning, the water was up to her knees.

She'd grabbed a few necessities before evacuating to her sister's house Wednesday. But for everything else, it was already too late.

"We can't find the dogs," she said Monday afternoon, standing in the master bedroom at her mother's house.

Warren has broken down at times, too. Every time she has walked into her mother's house, looking at the piles of wood planks tossed into the side of the living room, exposing mud-stained concrete beneath, or caught glimpses of the walls, where the bottom two feet of drywall had been zipped off to mitigate mold risk, she starts to feel the familiar tug-of-war of her anxiety.

The other day she thought she was having a heart attack and ought to go to the hospital. "But the hospital was closed."

For her part, Young joined the steady line of cars moving through the Ozen High School campus on Tuesday morning to pick up supplies.

The city's water service had been knocked out in the early-morning hours of Aug. 31 when its two intake facilities, each 10 miles apart, had flooded. They typically pump water from the nearby Neches river to a treatment facility.

It left the mother, who loves to cook her special shrimp stew for her family, without a means to go about her daily tasks.

She turned on the faucet and it ran dry. She wondered: Had she not paid her water bill?

In the ensuing days, the city scrambled to set up bottled-water giveaway sites and devise a temporary plumbing fix, pumping water with makeshift mechanisms from the river to the treatment plant. Still, that water hadn't been tested for safety and so city officials were recommending residents boil it.

Mayor Becky Ames said Tuesday she hoped the water would be cleared for drinking within a few days.

Residents in the area remained optimistic and expressed feelings of thanks for what they did have. But officials stressed that recovery would not happen overnight.

"You're going to have needs for years as we work our way through this," Gov. Greg Abbott told city leaders at a meeting at the high school later that day.

As the afternoon faded, Abbott concluded a more than hour-long meeting with local leaders. They'd raised needs like portable showers, cleaning supplies and reinforcements so law enforcement members could get a break, state Rep. Dade Phelan said. "He took a long shopping list," Phelan said, and then the governor picked up the phone to help.

Abbott went from the meeting to the parking lot where he helped hand out packaged meals to bewildered residents. Members of the media surrounded each car as Abbott calmly shook the hands of passengers and told him he was there to help. "I'm Greg Abbott," he said to those in one crowded vehicle. "God bless you and your family."

Young and her daughter meanwhile chose to use baby wipes instead of showering. They ate sandwiches and donated meals, or grilled. They didn't use the water in the sinks at all because they worried they wouldn't get the boiling process right.

"We're trying to all pull together as best we can," said her daughter, Tara Kraut, 49. "Neighbors helping neighbors."

Still, the pair worried it would be weeks before they were able drink a glass of water from the faucet.

Behind them in line was Bernadine Young, 69. She explained a sense that the city had gone through so much. Like many others, she had been eating lots of tuna, she said. But she'd learned to boil the water, putting to use six regular pots and her gumbo pot.

The task was difficult if you weren't used to it, she said. But she was getting the hang of it: That night, she hoped to be able to make steak and potatoes.

Across the city, residents dealt with drenched homes, tearing out carpeting, dry wall and insulation.

Some, like 37-year-old Eric McClory, had been lucky enough to get their furniture out in time. He had just finished redecorating his home, however, and all the work had been ruined. On Tuesday, he found himself in a home once again gutted, facing the decision of whether it would be worth rebuilding - a process that, on his own and with a limited budget, could take a year.

But he felt lucky, he said, because others had been able to leave with only a trash bag of belongings. He'd managed to save his children's toys and schoolbooks, along with other possessions.

"They're walking away from everything," he said of other residents.

Those hard-hit include Wanda Smith, 74, who lived a block over. Water had soaked many of her belongings, including antique furniture and a beloved collection of books. Now she struggled to figure out why her homeowner's insurance wouldn't cover floods.

"I'm in a mess," she said, taking a break from cleaning as she sat in a chair in her driveway. The area was without power and, of course, without potable water. Smith didn't want to use the untested source, which was coming at a low pressure and in fits and spurts, to clean.

"It makes me sick to my stomach," said her son, Grover Smith, 52, thinking of all the damage done and the financial situation to be resolved.

The effects of the storm were hard to ignore. The son had gone to his job at a school to coach high school football practice that morning - a slice of normalcy, he said. But when he returned Harvey hit him in the face.

He cleaned and cleaned, but the work still to do loomed large.

Nevertheless, the mother said, they would pull through. The whole city would.

"Everybody knows how sad it is in Beaumont," she said. "Everybody is facing it. It's not an individual thing."

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.
HEARST

http://thefacts.com/news/article_af180156-bda6-583c-aebb-a2ff0b2c2caf.html

County officials help residents with water well samples, tetanus vaccines

By STEPHANY GARZA stephany.garza@thefacts.com 13 hrs ago

Margaret Spears, left, and Irasema Garcia make their way to Brazoria National Bank to make a deposit Tuesday. A broken sewer system in the city likely means the floodwater has bacterial contamination, making the pedal boat a safer way to travel.

Buy Now

ANGLETON — Kevin Land lives in Plantation Oaks subdivision of Lake Jackson, where water got as far as his sidewalk. After volunteering to fill sandbags, city officials cautioned him and others to get a tetanus vaccine, but it was a follow-up call that prompted him to get the shot.

“They told us we should consider getting one when we were done volunteering and I had thought about it. If they had not prompted me with a call this morning, I may not have done it,” Land said.

Unlike other vaccine-preventable diseases, tetanus doesn’t spread person to person. The bacteria usually is found in soil, dust and manure which can enter the body through breaks in the skin, according to the Centers for Disease Control website.

Tetanus is a major concern for anyone exposed to unsanitary conditions because if they are injured — which is common in a disaster setting — the injury is likely to be contaminated. A wound, even just a small cut, could become contaminated if it comes into contact with feces, soil or saliva, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The county health department began offering free tetanus shots to residents Tuesday at two health clinics, at 434 E. Mulberry St. in Angleton and Pearland’s clinic at 2436 S. Grand Blvd.

Next to Angleton’s clinic, residents made their way to a tent outside the Brazoria County Water Lab to pick up sample containers to have their wells tested, another procedure the county is providing for free.

Nikki Elliott of Brazoria went to the lab Tuesday afternoon to get a sample bottle after her husband suggested they check their well. Floodwaters came up to her back porch, but not into the house, she said.

“I don’t know much about it, but my husband has lived out in Shady Acres for years,” she said. “He said they always have to get their water tested after all this kind of stuff.”

Elliott says the family usually drinks bottled water, but she has had to add bleach to her cleaning routine.

The county water lab at 409 E. Orange St. in Angleton tests for coliform and E. Coli bacteria which are more likely to contaminate private water wells after a flood event.

"Those are the two main bacteria that are in water that come from septic systems, all the cow pastures and that is what we do not want people to be using," said Cel Devereux, county water lab and technical manager.

Coliform means water is contaminated with soil or human feces. Most strains of E. Coli, or Escherichia coli, are harmless while others can cause illness. Some kinds of E. coli cause diarrhea, urinary tract infections, respiratory illness, pneumonia and other illnesses, according to the Centers for Disease Control website.

The lab began accepting samples last week. Each water sample goes through several procedures to test for the two bacteria.

"If they're yellow, they're bad. Unfortunately, we have a lot of bad ones from yesterday," Devereux said.

One water sample glowed a florescent blue under ultraviolet light indicating an E. Coli contamination.

Yellow samples after testing means the water is contaminated with coliform. If water glows blue under ultraviolet lights, the water indicates E. Coli contamination, she said.

"We don't get too many E. Coli, but we have had some," Devereux said.

So far the lab has seen water samples mostly from Alvin, Danbury and Pearland, Devereux said.

"We're telling people not to use the wells until they have had a good test and it comes back normal," Devereux said.

County water officials recommend residents use bottled water for everything until water results come back, but that message is difficult to get through. Water usage is part of everyone's daily routine, including brushing teeth, showering, cooking and cleaning, Devereux said.

"We can't tell people not to shower, but we advise people to shower at someone's home who's under a public water system or someone whose private well tested fine," she said.

Lab technicians call customers right away when they see a bad water sample. It takes about 24 hours to get results. After explaining what kind of bacteria they found, they ask the resident how the water sample was collected to ensure it was properly obtained. Sometimes residents don't disinfect their water well faucet before getting a sample, which could cause a false contamination reading, she said.

The county water lab anticipates it will offer free well testing for a considerable amount of time. During last year's Brazos River flood, the lab took samples up until January, Devereux said.

Those worried about their public water system, particularly Brazosport Water Authority customers, should not worry, officials say.

Not only is there an adequate water supply, the water provider ensures it is safe to drink.

"There's no reason to be concerned," said Ronnie Woodruff, Brazosport Water Authority general manager. "Our plant is operating under normal operating conditions. We have an adequate supply of chemicals and we have maintained higher pressure than normal. We haven't been compromised in any shape or form."

The water authority has also kept a close eye on the levee system. There haven't been any issues, but the water authority has additional staffing to monitor the system should it be breached.

"Rest assured, BWA meets all federal EPA and TCEQ requirements," Woodruff said.

Brazosport Water Authority serves Angleton, Brazoria, Clute, Freeport, Lake Jackson, Oyster Creek, Richwood, Rosenberg, Texas Department of Criminal Justice Clemens and Wayne Scott units and Dow Chemical.

Stephany Garza is a reporter for The Facts. Contact her at 979-237-0151.

Stephany Garza

EDITORIALS 16 HRS AGO

In Crosby, the lessons of West go unheeded

Dallas Morning News Editorial

Don't miss a story. Like us on Facebook.

Texas' approach to chemical storage amounts to what you don't know can't hurt you. Unfortunately, this also amounts to trusting without verification, and that's never a good policy.

Immediately after Hurricane Harvey struck, Arkema plant officials held a press briefing to explain that rising temperatures at the flood-drenched Crosby plant 30 miles northeast of downtown Houston would make it impossible for the company to keep the chemicals stored there cool enough to avert explosions.

Then a reporter asked the most telling question: what chemicals are in the plant and how much? Arkema chief executive officer Richard Rowe seemed taken back by the question and responded as if that answer didn't matter.

Well, it does. And that's a lesson Texans should have learned after the 2013 catastrophic explosion of a fertilizer plant in West that leveled the town and killed 15 people. Until it exploded, many residents didn't know they were sitting on a bomb. Subsequent investigations showed that oversight of the fertilizer plant fell between state and federal cracks.

According to the Texas Tribune, a federally mandated risk management plan and a detailed accounting of stored chemicals called a "Tier-II inventory" are technically considered public records. But current laws and state policies make it difficult to obtain and review these records or assess whether chemical companies have adequate backup plans.

Just months after the fertilizer plant explosion in West, then-Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott ruled that state agencies could withhold such information to protect the sites from potential terrorism.

Predictably, chief executive Rowe cited the need to "to balance the public's right to know with the public's right to be secure" for Arkema's secrecy. Eventually, the company released a list of organic peroxides used in the site's manufacturing process. But according to The New York Times, other hazardous chemicals, including sulfur dioxide and isobutylene were stored there and could have contaminated a far wider area if they had been released into the atmosphere.

Just as Texas has turned a blind eye to these problems of accountability and transparency, so has the Environmental Protection Agency. Under Administrator Scott Pruitt, the agency recently delayed compliance with a rule to prevent explosions and spills at chemical plants despite calls from the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board for the EPA to regulate chemicals that may cause violent explosions or fires like organic peroxides and make information about chemical storehouses more readily available.

The Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Boardsaid it will investigate the Arkema explosions,focusing on the company's risk-management plans and whether unstable chemicals, like organic peroxides, hurricanes, flooding and power failures were properly addressed in Arkema's risk-management plans.

The West explosion should have taught us a lesson about public safety. Apparently, it did not.

COMMENTARY HURRICANE HARVEY

Don't Be Surprised by the Explosion Near Houston. We've Cut Corners on Chemical Safety for Years.

Nicholas A. Ashford
Sep 05, 2017

Chemical containers at an Arkema plant in Crosby, a Texas town outside of Houston, exploded last week after the facility flooded from Hurricane Harvey's landfall. While we can't prevent natural disasters like Harvey from occurring, we can mitigate their consequences. Inherently unsafe facilities and operations can be redesigned, retrofitted, and ultimately replaced by manufacturing and storage facility changes that are safer. Unfortunately, the U.S. has chosen to take a less expensive and comprehensive approach to chemical safety, leaving us vulnerable to disasters like the one at Arkema.

There are two main approaches to safety in chemical plants: "inherent safety" and "secondary prevention." The Arkema plant followed secondary prevention, which involves the strengthening of reaction vessels and pipes, the use of neutralizing baths, and the venting of toxic or explosive chemicals. This approach focuses on minimizing, but not eliminating, the consequences once a facility has already been seriously damaged.

Inherent safety approaches, on the other hand, seek to prevent major damage from occurring in the first place. Organizations following this approach design production and storage facilities with significantly smaller probabilities of untoward human and commercial disasters. The European Union has adopted a chemical accident prevention approach focused on inherent safety over secondary prevention. The U.S. has taken the other route.

In 1996, 12 years after the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, exploded, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promulgated its first requirement that certain high hazard industries issue a risk management plan (RMP) to prevent chemical accidents. While this was a positive step, environmental and some chemical industry advocates urged the EPA to prioritize inherent safety approaches over secondary prevention. Regardless, the EPA caved in to massive chemical industry pressure and decided not to mandate inherent safety procedures.

ADVERTISING

Learn more

In the ensuing years, of course, chemical accidents continued to wreak havoc. According to an EPA analysis of the period from 2004 to 2013, 12,500 chemical facilities reported 1,500 accidents that led to property damage, injuries, and deaths.

In January 2017, the EPA published the Chemical Disaster Rule, a revised set of more stringent requirements than the 1996 RMP. The revised rule would have enhanced protection for local first responders, community members, and employees from death or injury due to chemical facility accidents. These were positive steps for chemical safety. Yet in June, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt ordered a 20-month delay in implementation of the rule. Once again, the EPA chose to avoid the safer approach.

The rule's more stringent provisions did not mandate inherent safety approaches, but did require designated operations to assess whether safety improvements were practicable. These improvements included storing fewer chemicals, using better tanks, and improving backup power systems, in other words, feasible, effective, and immediately needed improvements. The rule also had more stringent requirements for data accessibility and emergency planning in case of disaster.

No one is expecting chemical production, manufacturing, and storage to magically transform into a completely safe process overnight. But government at all levels should hasten the adoption of common-sense, inherently safer rules to save lives, and to protect businesses and communities.

Nicholas A. Ashford is a professor of technology and policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former chair of the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health.

This Unique EPA Plane Is Monitoring Toxic Waste Dumps Around Houston

Environmental agency keeps the contractor-operated plane on standby 24/7 for chemical and radiological incidents.

BY JOSEPH TREVITHICK
SEPTEMBER 5, 2017

THE WAR ZONE | ASPECT | CESSNA C208 | DISASTER RESPONSE | EPA | FLOODING | HOUSTON | HURRICANE HARVEY | ISR | SUPERFUND PROGRAM | TEXAS | TOXIC WASTE

AIRBORNE ASPECT

SHARE

As federal, state, and local agencies continue to respond to the damage and flooding wrought by Hurricane Harvey in Texas, as well as neighboring Louisiana, one of the more contentious questions has been the danger posed to communities by heavily polluted sites within the disaster zone. As part of its response, the Environmental Protection Agency has deployed the unique Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology surveillance aircraft, which can spot chemical and radiological material from the air, to help assess the situation.

More commonly known by the acronym ASPECT, contractor owned and operated system is configured to collect chemical and radiological information, as well as both color visual and infrared imagery. EPA has had it on call for more than a decade, sending it out in the past to either actively monitor disasters, including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, or be ready in the event of an emergency during a major public event, such as multiple presidential inaugurations, Super Bowls, and other large gatherings.

THIS MYSTERIOUS MILITARY SPY PLANE HAS BEEN FLYING CIRCLES OVER SEATTLE FOR DAYS
By Tyler Rogoway and Joseph Trevithick

THIS IS HOW AMERIC KEEPS WATCH OVEI NORTH KOREA FROI THE SKY
By Joseph Trevithick
Posted in THE WAR ZONI

"ASPECT is the nation's only airborne real-time chemical and radiological detection, infrared and photographic imagery platform," EPA says on its website. "ASPECT is available to assist local, national, and international agencies supporting hazardous substance response, radiological incidents, and situational awareness."

Similar to many military intelligence and reconnaissance aircraft, the APSECT aircraft carries a wide-angle mapping camera and an infrared line scanner that can create thermal imagery of the ground below as the plane flies along. Analysts can put the basic color images together form even larger maps of a specific area, well.

AIRBORNE ASPECT

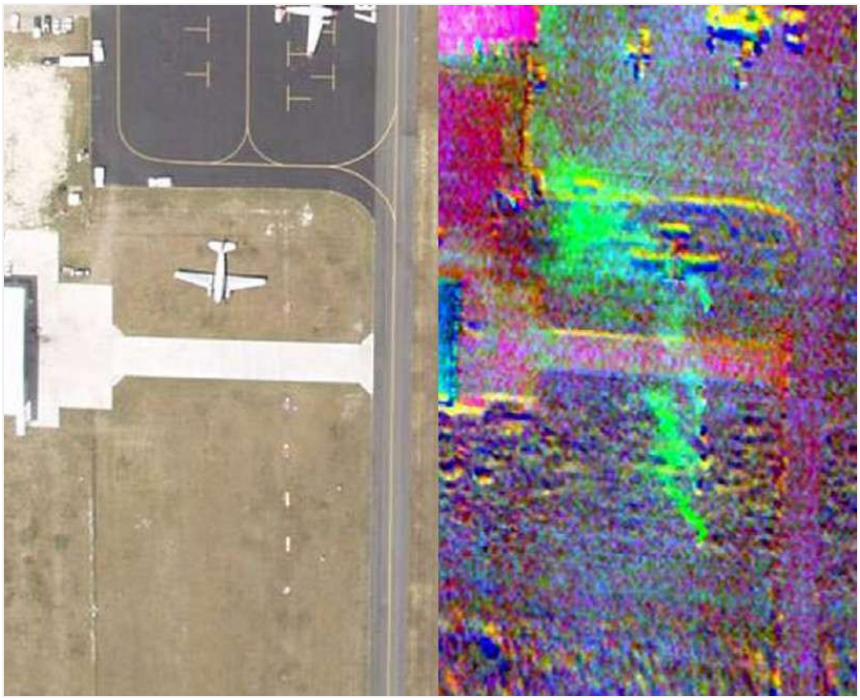
In addition, EPA's surveillance aircraft has less common gamma ray and multi-spectral chemical spectrometers. This allows the crew to collect information about spreading hazards that may not be visible to the human eye. The chemical sensor can help determine what compounds are present and how densely they're concentrated in the air. The Department of Energy also has aircraft for mapping radiological incidents, in particular a small fleet of Bell 412 helicopters specifically outfitted for the role. But these aircraft lack the ability to keep tabs on other toxic chemicals that may be airborne and they don't have ASPECT's multi-spectral imaging capabilities. From the EPA's website:

> "The National Nuclear Security Administration, part of the Department of Energy, does operate the Aerial Measuring System. However, this only collects radiological data in real time, while ASPECT provides a multi-sensor capability."

Initially, the contractor used a twin engine Aero Commander 690, seen in the video below, to carry all of these systems. This eventually gave way to a simpler and cheaper to operate Cessna C208B Grand Cavaran, which is the present platform. As of April 2014, it cost EPA $1,500 per flight hour to operate the ASPECT Cessna.

Contractor Airborne ASPECT says it can have the plane up in the air from its home base near Dallas, Texas and on its way to a disaster are within an hour. Within nine hours, the aircraft can reach anywhere in the country. According to EPA, it only takes one phone call to the company to get the whole process started.

In or near an affected area, a team of scientists and other specialists set up a processing center on the ground to pore over the data. It only takes approximately five minutes for the crew of the aircraft to send the compressed information to this team via a satellite link.



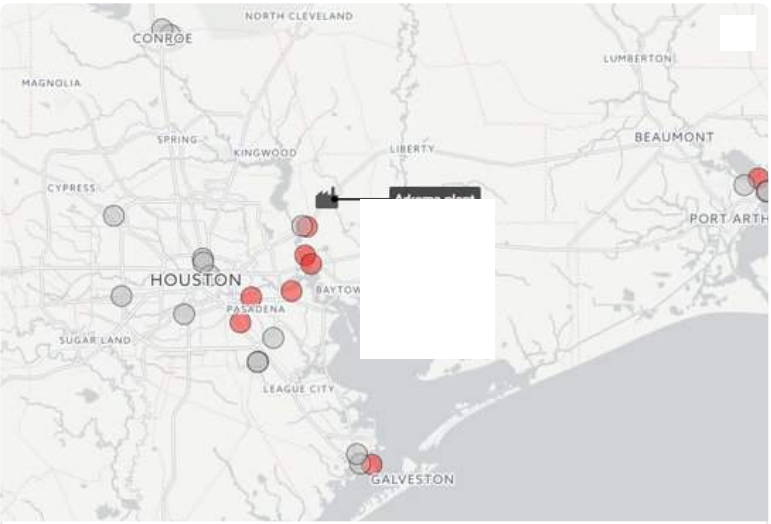
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU VIA FOIA

ASPECT can produce traditional visuals, left, and multi-spectral imagery showing chemical plumes.

Though EPA runs the ASPECT program, other agencies, including the National Guard, can request support from the aircraft through the Department of Homeland Security's Interagency Remote Sensing Coordination Cell. According to a 2013 National Guard handbook on incident awareness and assessment, which the author previously obtained via the Freedom of Information Act, the plane's capabilities could be useful in general after earthquakes, floods,

tsunamis, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, and terror attacks, as well as hurricanes.

Already situated in Texas, ASPECT was quickly on the scene over Houston after Harvey hit. More importantly, it has given EPA a way to quickly inspect the toxic Houston-area zones, known as Superfund sites. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 designated these areas for cleanup as part of the Superfund program.



Peter Aldhous @paldhous Follow

Texas Superfund sites in the aftermath of #Harvey and ASPECT, the EPA's chemical hazards monitoring plane buzzfeed.com/nidhisubbarama…

7:15 PM - Sep 3, 2017

2 20 24

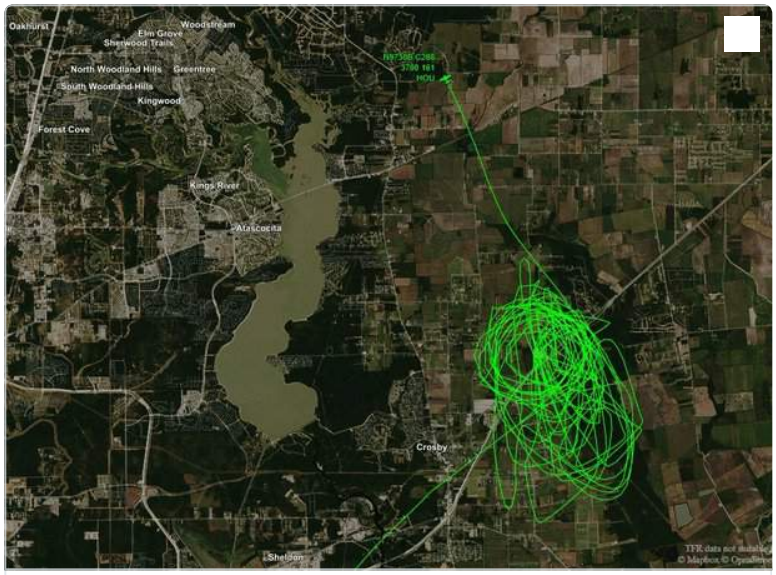
Texas is home to 66 Superfund sites, more than 40 of which were within Hurricane Harvey's impact area, according to Buzzfeed News. There is no indication that any of these contain radioactive materials, so ASPECT is likely gathering information on potential chemical releases, as well as basic information about the state of the areas.

The Superfund areas in the site mainly contain waste from oil, gas, and other petrochemical

related activities, as well as farming and ranching. As such, they can contain dangerous, toxic, and carcinogenic substances, such as sulfuric acid, heavy metals, now-banned pesticides, and polychlorinated biphenyls, better known as PCBs.

The concern is that the floodwaters could spread hazardous material and poison soil and groundwater for years to come. The storm and subsequent flooding had damaged more than a dozen, inundating the areas and limiting the ability of specialists to gain access on the ground.

ASPECT can monitor at least some of this danger from the air, though it would not be able to see pollution seeping down into ground below or necessarily be able to accurately discriminate pollutants mixing with the water above. The plane's operations have been an important part of the EPA's response to the disaster, which has received criticism from the press.



Andrew Kimmel @andrew… Follow

Here is the flight path of the Cessna plane that's been circling overhead. It just broke its circular formation and is heading north.

5:48 PM - Sep 3, 2017 · Texas, USA

2 7 15

In a now controversial article, The Associated Press said it had managed to reach seven of the sites by boat, but had not received an explanation from EPA about why its inspectors had been unable to do the same. EPA said that its personnel would visit the sites on the ground once it was safe to do so and in the meantime would continue collecting data via ASPECT.

The piece noted that in 2012, under President Barack Obama, the environmental agency had completed a report warning about the risk to Superfund sites from flooding and rising sea levels related to climate change. President Donald Trump's first budget request proposes a 30 percent cut to funding for the Superfund Program and his administration's EPA Director Scott Pruitt has previously denied any scientific consensus on the existence on global climate change.

In response to the Associated Press story and subsequent reporting, the agency issued an unusually personalized public rebuke, suggesting that one of the article's authors, Michael Biesecker, had deliberately left out numerous key details, including that it had worked with authorities in Texas to secure the Superfund sites before Harvey made landfall. The news wire issued its own statement afterwards, standing by work of its team and their on-the-ground reporting.

Regardless, neither the EPA nor independent observers may know the exact extent of the damage and resulting danger to nearby communities for some time. Despite previous warnings, no Superfund site has ever experienced this level of flooding, Buzzfeed reported, making it a completely unprecedented situation.

"We don't have any precedent to figuring out what the cumulative effect is going to be on someone's health," Jennifer Horney, an associate professor of epidemiology at Texas A&M University who has led her own team to collect water and soil samples for

analysis, told Buzzfeed. "They're [residents of Houston] not going to get cancer tomorrow – they may get asthma in three months."

In the meantime, it seems likely that the aircraft will continue to monitor the status of the Superfund sites, at least until the floodwaters begin to recede, which may take weeks. You can keep an eye out yourself for the ASPECT plane, which has the U.S. civil aviation registration N9738B, using online flight tracking sites.

Extreme Weather

Hurricane Irma slams Caribbean islands as it heads toward Puerto Rico

By Jason Hanna, Faith Karimi and Steve Almasy, CNN

Updated 10:27 AM ET, Wed September 6, 2017

Story highlights

"Potentially catastrophic" storm is packing winds of up to 185 mph

Irma's center is expected to pass near or just north of Puerto Rico later Wednesday

(CNN) — *[Breaking news update, published at 10:26 a.m. ET]*

Four of the strongest buildings on the Caribbean island of St. Martin have been destroyed by Hurricane Irma, French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said at a news conference Wednesday.

It's likely that all other older buildings there have at least been damaged, he said.

About half of the island is a French overseas collectivity, and the remainder is a constituent country of the Netherlands.

[Original story, published at 10:17 a.m. ET]

An extremely dangerous Hurricane Irma pounded small northern Caribbean islands Wednesday morning as one of the strongest storms recorded in the Atlantic -- and is on a path to hit parts of the British Virgin Islands and perhaps skirt northern Puerto Rico later in the day.

Irma's core, with maximum sustained winds of 185 mph -- well above the 157 mph threshold of a Category 5 -- slammed Barbuda early Wednesday before hitting Saint Martin and Anguilla.

Barbuda, home to about 1,600 people, was "so badly damaged that there is no communication" from the island, said Keithley Meade, director of a meteorological office in Antigua and Barbuda.

"We have a lot of broken trees across the island," Meade said from Antigua, whose 80,000 people comprise most of the two-island nation's population.

Virginia Barreras told CNN she was riding out the storm in tiny Saint Martin -- an island of about 75,000 people -- in a "sanctuary hotel" where tourists and locals were encouraged to check in before the eye wall hit.

"The palm trees are bent over and (I) can't see anything but white," she said early Wednesday, before Irma's core passed. "The walls shake when the wind blows hard, and we can hear debris being thrown around.

The Category 5 hurricane is "potentially catastrophic," the National Hurricane Center said. Besides devastating winds, the center warns of high storm surges that could crush low-lying structures near shore.

Though Irma's path is uncertain, forecasters have said it could turn toward Florida over the weekend, and officials there are ordering some evacuations and shutting down schools.

Latest developments

-- Around 8 a.m. ET Wednesday, Irma's core was spinning about 15 miles west-southwest of Anguilla, with maximum sustained winds of 185 mph.

-- After slamming St. Martin and Anguilla and St. Kitts and Nevis in the morning, the storm is expected to be near the British Virgin Islands and northern US Virgin Islands.

-- The storm's center is then expected to pass near or just north of Puerto Rico on Wednesday afternoon or night.

-- Irma on Thursday and Friday is likely to be near the Turks and Caicos islands and the southeastern Bahamas, where storm surges of up to 20 feet are possible, the hurricane center said.

-- It's too early to tell whether it will make landfall on the US mainland, but forecasts show it could churn toward Florida over the weekend.

-- People in Florida should heed any evacuation order, Gov. Rick Scott said Wednesday. "(A) storm surge could cover your house. We can rebuild homes -- we cannot rebuild your family," he said.

-- In the US Virgin Islands, Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp ordered a 36-hour curfew that started at 6 a.m. local time Wednesday.

-- The season opener for the NFL's Miami Dolphins and Tampa Bay Buccaneers has been postponed Sunday in Miami because of Irma. The game will instead be played in Miami on November 19.

Full coverage

- Track the storm
- Florida prepares for Irma
- Navy evacuates 5,000
- Puerto Ricans stock up
- See Irma from space

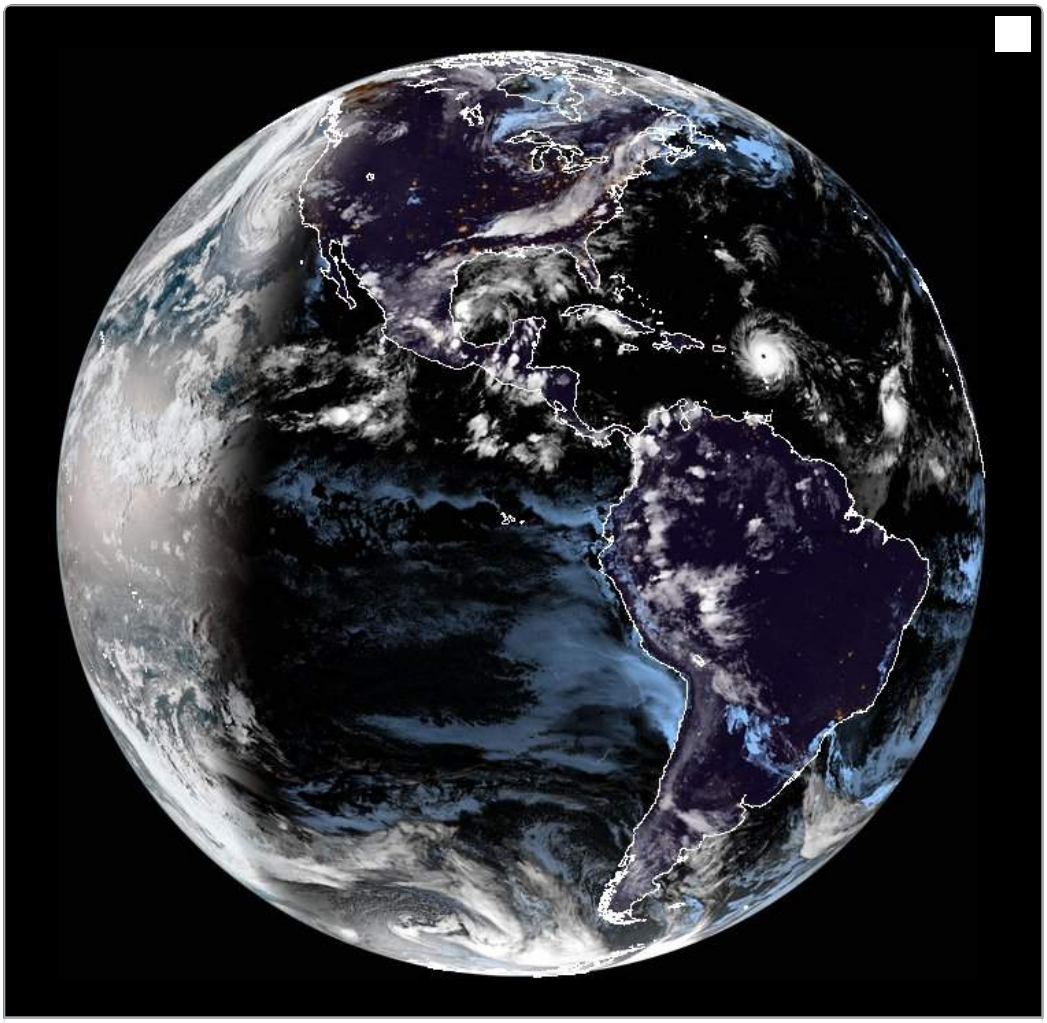
'We've been hiding in the bathroom'

Irma affected many northern Caribbean islands Wednesday, even those not touched by the powerful core. In Marigot, Guadeloupe, Florida resident Loren Ann Mayo rode out the storm on the sixth floor of a beachside hotel.

"We've been hiding in the bathroom," she said in a video she posted to Facebook. About an inch of water covered parts of the floor, and pieces of drywall had fallen onto a balcony and a bed inside, she said.

Mayo was there on a business trip. "It is pouring down rain. It is howling," she told CNN. "Most people are either in their bathroom, or they've been moved downstairs to the third floor where management thinks is a very, very safe spot."

Forecasters are mostly concerned about the northeastern Caribbean, according to Michael Brennan of the hurricane center.



Jeff Frame
@VORTEXJeff

Follow

The eye of #Irma stands out clearly on full-disk satellite imagery tonight.

9:07 PM - Sep 5, 2017

76 2,577 2,542

Islands under hurricane warning include Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, Puerto Rico, the US and British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Martin/St. Maarten, St. Barts, the Dominican Republic from Cabo Engano to the northern border with Haiti, Guadeloupe, the southeastern Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Related Video: Space station gets a look at Hurricane Irma 00:48

Crowds wait outside a store in Puerto Rico as Hurricane Irma nears.

Puerto Rico: Long lines

Storm surge is a concern for the Virgin Islands (up to 11 feet) and Puerto Rico (up to 5 feet), as is heavy rain (up to 10 inches in the Virgin Islands, and up to 15 in parts of Puerto Rico).

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló declared a state of emergency and has activated the National Guard.

For hours, people lined up outside hardware stores, hoping to get plywood, batteries and power generators. If Irma knocks out power, Puerto Ricans said it could take weeks or months before it is restored.

Last month, the director of Puerto Rico's power utility, Ricardo Ramos Rodríguez, said several factors have made the island's electric system "vulnerable and fragile," CNN affiliate WAPA reported.

One of those is the shortage of employees. Many workers recently retired or left their jobs for better prospects on the US mainland, Ramos Rodríguez said.

Turks and Caicos and the Bahamas

Forecasters warn that Irma's likely path will be near the Turks and Caicos Islands on Thursday and the southeastern Bahamas on Friday -- and that the destruction could be devastating.

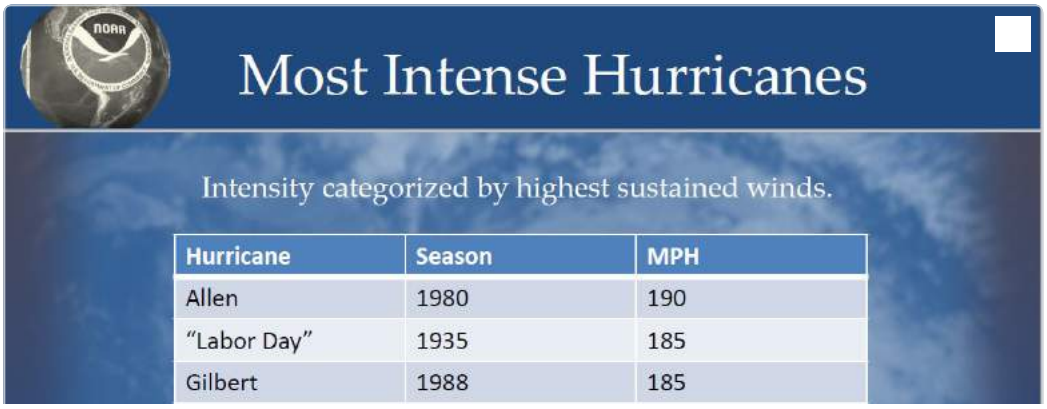
In the Bahamas, emergency evacuations have been ordered for six southern islands -- Mayaguana, Inagua, Crooked Island, Acklins, Long Cay and Ragged Island.

"This is the largest such evacuation in the history of the country," Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said.

Bahamian officials also canceled vacation time for police and defense forces.

"Some of the (Bahamian) islands aren't more than 9 feet (above sea level). Storm surges there may be 20 feet. You get the idea what's going to happen to those islands," CNN meteorologist Chad Myers said.

Evacuations set for Florida



Hurricane	Season	MPH
Allen	1980	190
"Labor Day"	1935	185
Gilbert	1988	185

NEWS ALERT

Democratic leaders Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi talk about the future of DACA. Watch live

U.S. +

Live TV

Jimmy Brumbaugh packed up his family in their RV and left Astatula, Florida, for Georgia. As he headed out of town, he posted a picture showing a long line of cars, waiting to get gas.

"People are genuinely scared down here," he said. "... We are dead center in the state, but I'm not taking any chances. I also don't want to put my family through the misery of riding out the storm. We've done it before, and it's horrible."

toptech08
Harris Oil Company

Follow

43 likes **13 comments**

The chaos at the pump has begun.

20 HOURS AGO

In Eustis, northwest of Orlando, Pat Arnold and her husband took precautions in case Irma hit.

"My husband and I prepared for Irma by getting some cash out, fueling cars and filling gas cans with nonethanol gas (for use with our chainsaw if needed), ... and making sure we have enough batteries, canned food, etc," she told CNN.

From Miami Beach to Ocala, Floridians braced for the storm, with some posting images of empty shelves at local grocery stores.

Miami-Dade County will start evacuating special-needs residents Wednesday, and may announce other evacuations soon, Mayor Carlos Gimenez said.

Schools and county offices will be closed Thursday and Friday.

Monroe County, which includes the Florida Keys, was ordering visitors to evacuate by sunrise Wednesday, and residents should begin to evacuate 12 hours later.

After declaring a state of emergency across Florida, the governor said President Donald Trump had "offered the full resources of the federal government."

Scott also ordered 7,000 National Guard troops to report for duty by Friday morning.

"Learn your evacuation zone. Listen to your locals," he said. "This storm has the potential to devastate this state. You have to take this seriously."

Related Article: With Harvey's havoc on their minds, Floridians brace for Irma

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Jose, in the open Atlantic far to the southeast of Irma, is expected to become a hurricane by Wednesday night.

"Interests in the Leeward Islands should monitor the progress of Jose," the National Hurricane Center said.

Are you affected by Irma? Text, iMessage or WhatsApp your videos, photos and stories to CNN: +1 347-322-0415.

¿Te ha afectado Irma? Envía tus fotos, vídeos e historias a CNN por texto, iMessage y WhatsApp: +1 347-322-0415

CNN's Bijan Hosseini, Eric Levenson, Paul Murphy, Amanda Jackson and Keith Williams contributed to this report.

'Wonder List' in the Galapagos: How do Darwin's theories hold up today?

How Obama's note to Trump defied history

Born in the USA, living in Mexico

Gen. Robert E. Lee descendant leaves pulpit after backlash

Recommended by

DALLASNEWS
Powered by The Dallas Morning News

EDITORIALS 17 HRS AGO

Why Dallas must use Hurricane Harvey as a catalyst for responsible growth

Dallas Morning News Editorial

Don't miss a story. Like us on Facebook. Like 390K

Seed-firm suers told to file in Missouri

By Stephen Steed
This article was published today at 2:03 a.m.

1

Comments Font Size

Arkansas farmers who planted Monsanto's dicamba-tolerant crops, then sued the company this summer, will have to take their case to Monsanto's home turf in Missouri.

After an hourlong hearing Tuesday, U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall said contracts between the farmers and Monsanto regarding the disposition of any disputes were enforceable and not unreasonable.

"You made some good points, but the law is firmly against you here," Marshall told David Hodges, a Little Rock attorney for about a dozen Phillips County farmers who challenged Monsanto's efforts to move the case from Arkansas to Missouri.

Monsanto also has a motion pending to have the case dismissed. No hearings have been set on that matter.

The contracts -- called the Monsanto Technology/Stewardship Agreement -- say disputes with soybean farmers and other producers must be filed in federal court or in state circuit court in St. Louis.

Disputes with cotton farmers go to arbitration hearings held in the grower's home state, according to the contracts.

Monsanto is based in Creve Coeur, a St. Louis suburb.

Jan Paul Miller, a St. Louis attorney for Monsanto, said Tuesday there was no dispute over whether the farmers signed the contracts. All other matters, including whether the farmers understood what they were signing or the convenience of a trial in St. Louis or Little Rock, were irrelevant, Miller said.

Law in Arkansas and in Missouri is clear, Miller said. "If you signed it, you signed it," he said.

In a lawsuit first filed in Phillips County Circuit Court on June 20 and then transferred to federal district court in Arkansas, the Phillips County farmers said they bought and planted Monsanto's dicamba-tolerant soybeans and cotton this year.

They claimed they were unable to fully use the technology after Arkansas banned the sale and use of the dicamba herbicide after July 11, because of hundreds of complaints alleging that the herbicide had moved off target and damaged thousands of acres of crops, produce and other vegetation not dicamba-tolerant. Dicamba has been effective in killing pigweed, a crop nuisance that has grown resistant to other herbicides.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the state Plant Board had received 963 complaints.

The lawsuit was the first filed by farmers who planted Monsanto's Xtend crop system. Other lawsuits in Missouri and Arkansas have been filed by farmers whose crops were damaged in 2016, when Monsanto sold dicamba-tolerant seeds despite not yet having its dicamba herbicide approved by federal regulators.

Another defendant in the lawsuit, BASF, took no position on whether the lawsuit should be transferred. BASF's dicamba-based herbicide, Engenia, was the only dicamba legal for in-crop use this year in the state. Monsanto signed a licensing agreement with BASF to allow the sale of Engenia, a competitor to Monsanto's Xtendimax with VaporGrip. The companies say their new versions are less volatile and less prone to off-target drift.

Edmond issues water statement after odor, taste inquiries

From Staff Reports • Published: September 6, 2017 5:00 AM CDT • Updated: September 6, 2017 5:00 AM CDT

After numerous residents inquired about the odor and taste of Edmond's water, the city issued a statement Tuesday stating the water is safe for consumption

The water meets the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act regulated by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, a news release stated.

Edmond's water supply consists of two primary sources: Surface water from Arcadia Lake and well water from the Garber-Wellington aquifer. The current issue stems from Arcadia Lake experiencing problems associated with dissolved organic matter (algae), the statement explained.

Hot and dry weather from June through mid-August attributed to an increase in algae concentrations in the lake. Recent rains have compounded the issue by stirring up the lake layers and causing further breakdown of algae. The algae presence and breakdown can give the drinking water an earthy or musty odor and taste.

The city will be increasing the level of ozone used in the water treatment process as it is the most effective way to combat this odor and taste event, according to the news release.

Upcoming cooler weather also will help slow the breakdown of organic matter and result in improved water odor and taste, the city says.

For more information regarding Edmond's water supply, go to edmondwater.com or call 216-7675.

Subscribe to NewsOK's Daily News Headlines

Email address Subscribe

Stay informed with a wide selection of the top news, sports, entertainment and lifestyle headlines. Delivered twice daily.
View sample

Sponsored Content

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Dallas, Texas: This Brilliant Company Is Disrupting a $200 Billion Industry
EverQuote Insurance Quotes

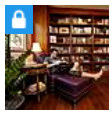
Reclusive Millionaire Warns Retirees: "Get Out Of Cash Now"
Daily Wealth

Diver Finds WWII Planes At Bottom Of Pacific, But When She Looks Inside...

from THE NEWSOK HOMEPAGE

Purcell/Lexington: New bridge over troubled waters

OKC school board discusses renaming schools



Log-in | Read for 99¢
Living and learning

Cowboys better suited to avoid trap games

Edmond gives update on city's water quality concerns

What Oklahoma's federal senators are saying about DACA

See more stories on NewsOK homepage

RECOMMENDED STORIES

Dallas, Texas: This Brilliant Company Is Disrupting a $200 Billion Industry
EverQuote Insurance Quotes

Former Turnpike Authority worker sentenced in embezzlement

Reclusive Millionaire Warns Retirees: "Get Out Of Cash