

FLORIDA DEEPWATER HORIZON RESPONSE MAY 6, 2010

TALLAHASSEE – The State Emergency Response Team, in support of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as the lead response agency for the state of Florida, is actively monitoring the Deepwater Horizon response.

The following is a summary of state and BP response actions to date, as well as tips for residents and visitors to take precautions both pre and post-landfall.

Landfall Predictions:

- Deepwater Horizon continues to discharge an estimated 5,000 barrels (210,000 gallons) per day.
- BP has completed construction of a dome, expected to be in place as early as next weekend, which will be used in an attempt to contain the oil discharge. BP has also begun drilling a relief well to eliminate the discharge.
- Currently, there are no impacts to the state projected in the next 72 hours. The loop current is far south of the oil and there is no imminent threat that the oil will be picked up by the loop current. However, Florida continues to make preparations to safeguard the state's shoreline.
- The state of Florida reminds its residents and visitors that the state's coastline has not been impacted at this time and remains open for public enjoyment.

State Actions:

- On May 5, 2010, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Sector St. Petersburg, DEP, and BP set up an Incident Command (in support of the Area Command) at the USCG Sector St. Petersburg offices in St. Petersburg today. The Incident Command will be largely geared toward planning and will grow if it becomes necessary. Sector Key West has set up a virtual Incident Command and is looking to establish a physical Incident Command in the next few days which will focus on planning.
- Governor Charlie Crist confirmed on Wednesday that Florida will receive a \$25-million block grant from BP for initial state and local preparation and response costs.
- The State Emergency Response Team has dozens of team members deployed throughout the anticipated impact region to assist with Deepwater Horizon preparation and response.
- The State Emergency Operations Center remains activated at a Level 2 or Partial activation.

- On April 30, 2010, Governor Charlie Crist declared a state of emergency (Emergency Order 10-99) for Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay and Gulf Counties.
- On May 3, 2010, Governor Charlie Crist extended a state of emergency declaration (Emergency Order 10-100) for the coastal counties of Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, Taylor, Dixie, Levy, Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota.
- DEP conducted water and sediment sampling to use as a baseline for ongoing monitoring.
- DEP is continuously monitoring air quality data. The public can view this data at <http://www.airnow.gov/> or <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>.
- DEP, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), county governments, water management districts and several federal agencies continue to conduct pre-impact assessments, including sampling of water, fish, shellfish and habitats along the Florida coastline and into the Gulf of Mexico.
- Statewide monitoring is ongoing in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Emergency Support Function 15, Volunteers and Donations, successfully spearheaded pre-impact beach cleanups over the weekend of May 1-2. More than 1,200 volunteers participated in cleanups in Escambia, Santa Rosa and Wakulla counties to minimize the effect of the Deepwater Horizon incident. Volunteer Florida offers guidance for conducting safe pre-impact beach cleanups at www.volunteerflorida.org.
- Florida residents are discouraged from signing any documents provided to them in return for money from BP or anyone else until they know the extent of their loss, which may be significantly higher than the money being paid. These may be fraudulent or premature.
- The Attorney General's fraud hotline is open to receive any reports of fraud or price gouging. The hotline is 1-866-966-7226.
- The Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner gas price-gouging hotline is also operational. The toll-free hotline number is 1-800-HELP-FLA (1-800-435-7352).

Boom Placement:

- There is approximately 144,700 feet of boom placed along Florida's Panhandle in the Pensacola region.
- An additional 14,700 feet is expected to be placed today.

- Currently 20,000 feet of boom is staged in Pensacola with an additional 60,000 booms on order. In Panama City, there is 45,000 feet staged and an additional 53,000 feet of boom on order.
- Placement of boom is based on tides and where the oil is threatening, as well as direction given in each region's area contingency plan.
 - To view the Coast Guard Mobile Area Contingency Plan visit: <http://ocean.floridamarine.org/ACP/MOBACP/StartHere.html>.
 - To view the Coast Guard St. Petersburg Area Contingency Plan visit: http://research.myfwc.com/features/view_article.asp?id=3482
- The booming strategy focuses on identified environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Estuaries and inlets are at the top of the list, not the beach areas.
 - This is to protect sensitive habitat that support wildlife and fish.
 - If the oil washes on the beach, the sand can be cleaned.
 - Note that booms are not a failsafe solution.
 - They can become ineffective in high seas, strong winds, or currents over one knot.
- Florida's counties are working through the State Emergency Operations Center. Each county provides input, but the operational decisions are made through the Unified Command. The State Emergency Response Team is working with the counties, BP as well as the federal agencies to maximize protection and minimize impacts.

Health Effects:

- At this time, there are no indications of any health risks to Floridians due to the Deepwater Horizon incident. The Department of Health (DOH) and DEP are closely monitoring health and environmental impacts to Florida's beaches and will notice an advisory if conditions become unsafe.
- Consider the following tips for avoiding negative health impacts from an oiled shoreline:
 - Avoid entering areas where oil can be seen or smelled.
 - Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil-contaminated water and sediments.

- Do not swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill, and if traveling through the area by boat, take precautions when hoisting the boat anchor. If oil makes contact with skin, wash it off with soap and water.
 - Do not fish in oil spill-affected waters.
 - Do not harvest or eat dead fish, fish with oily residue or fish that have a petroleum odor.
 - Avoid boating through oil slicks or sheens.
 - Young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and individuals with underlying respiratory conditions should avoid the area.
 - Prevent pets from entering oil-contaminated areas.
- Impacts to Florida's coastline could include tarballs – fragments or lumps of oil weathered to a semi-solid or solid consistency. Tarballs feel sticky, and are difficult to remove from contaminated surfaces. Impacts could also come in the form of an oil sheen or tar mat – a sheet of oil that is thicker than a sheen. Should individuals observe tarballs or other evidence of oil on Florida's coastline, they should leave the area and report the incident to (866) 448-5816.
 - Those near Florida's Gulf Coast may detect an odor because of the oil spill. Some people are more sensitive to these odors and may experience nasal irritation and feelings of nausea. In combination with seasonal allergies, such as sensitivity to pollen or pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, some people may experience more severe symptoms.
 - Individuals experiencing symptoms that are aggravated by the odors from the oil spill should consider:
 - Staying indoors, in air conditioning, and avoiding strenuous outdoor activity.
 - If symptoms do not improve, contact a primary care physician or other health care provider for medical advice.
 - Individuals who have pre-existing medical conditions, such as asthma or other respiratory illness should contact their health care provider if feeling symptomatic.

Fisheries & Seafood:

- The fisheries, wildlife and seafood off of Florida's coast in state waters are safe and there are no alerts at this time.
- On May 3, 2010 NOAA restricted fishing for a minimum of ten days in federal waters most affected by the BP oil spill, largely between Louisiana state waters at the mouth of the Mississippi River to waters off Florida's Pensacola Bay. Details can be found here: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.
- Fishermen who wish to contact BP about a claim should call 1-800-440-0858.
- FWC is working with DEP, county governments, water management districts and several federal agencies including NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct pre-impact wildlife assessments.
- These assessments include samples of water, sediments, fish, shellfish and habitats along the Florida coastline and into the Gulf of Mexico. Assessments are needed to provide baseline information prior to the anticipated impact.
- Examples of the assessments include the following:
 - FWC and the University of South Florida College of Marine Science are designing a multi-day scientific research study to obtain information on fisheries resources and plankton in the Gulf of Mexico near the Florida Panhandle.
 - Aerial surveys also are planned to identify locations of marine mammals.
 - Groups are marking the location of bird and sea turtle nesting sites along the beach. Nests are marked to help prioritize response with real-time information.
 - FWC urges citizens to report oiled wildlife to the Joint Information Center by calling 1-866-557-1401.
- For the safety of the public as well as the safety of animals, rescues should be conducted by trained responders. Untrained rescuers may cause more harm than good.
- Anyone involved in volunteer efforts to clear trash from the beaches should be careful of shorebird nesting areas. If birds in the area are acting agitated, calling or swooping at people, there is a good possibility it is a nesting area. The FWC asks the public and oil spill responders to retreat the way they approached and leave the nesting area. Anyone involved in volunteer efforts to clear trash from the beaches should be particularly careful.

- Avoid working in areas where shorebirds are nesting; never enter or approach a posted shorebird area.
- When near nesting areas, stay below the high tide (wrack) line. Shorebirds nest on the open beach above this line. Nests are scrapes in the sand and the eggs are small and camouflaged. They easily can be crushed by pedestrians and vehicles.
- Remove only manmade trash. Seaweed and other natural debris are critical to shorebirds.
- Even though the wrack line is important to wildlife, if it becomes oiled it then becomes a death trap for birds and other wildlife and makes removal of oil from the beach more difficult. Timing for removal of beach wrack in oil spill response is critical. It should be left on the beach in areas of active nesting as long as possible but removed immediately prior to beaches becoming oiled. In areas distant from active nesting, cleanup of wrack and other natural debris can be performed to better facilitate future oil removal.
- On some Panhandle beaches, the FWC has installed short, white, PVC tubes in the dunes to track endangered beach mice, and on Perdido Key, small aluminum boxes also are being used. This important equipment should not be removed from the beach.
- Also, sea turtle nests are marked with stakes and orange tape - do not remove these items because they help protect the nests from disturbances.
- Do not place litter above the tide line; this can also interfere or cause harm to nesting birds.
- Do not use equipment such as rakes, shovels or tractors.
- Do not bring dogs onto the beach. Dogs, even when leashed, are very threatening to birds and cause them to panic.
- Seabirds and shorebirds are protected by law. Report anyone harming or harassing these birds or nest disturbances to 1-888-404-FWCC (3922).

Closures:

- Currently there are no Florida State Park or beach closures. For more information about Florida State Parks, visit: www.floridastateparks.org.

Tourism:

- Florida's pristine beaches and famed fishing grounds remain open to residents and visitors. **Currently, there are no impacts to Florida's 2,276 miles of tidal shoreline and 663 miles of beaches. Florida's shores are clear and open for business.**
- If you are planning a trip to the Sunshine State and are concerned about any potential impact from the Deepwater Horizon Oil incident, VISIT FLORIDA encourages you to check with local destinations in order to get the most up-to-date information.
- The following webpage provides helpful local links to check on the status of your Florida destination: http://www.visitflorida.com/florida_travel_advisory/.

Business Information:

- Florida's coastal businesses should be prepared to make loss of earnings claims for damages incurred as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Florida Department of Financial Services provides the following suggestions:
 - Take detailed records of cancelled reservations. It is important that when these cancellations occur, the cancelling party is questioned whether the cause is because of the oil spill. If the answer is yes, keep a record of the person's name and contact information, and also the revenues lost as a result of the cancellation.
 - Calculate estimated losses for a six-week period and be able to provide records, sales receipts and documentation to support such a claim. A good idea would be to compare business now to a five-year average of revenues between May and June, which can offer insight as to the damages incurred.
 - Make a detailed list of assets – including non-structural -- and include appropriate records to support the list. For example: if your hotel or restaurant is within walking distance to the beach and that beach has oil reach its shores, the business' assets are damaged even though there is no physical damage to the structure, and it is important to record this depreciation.
- Be wary of insurance settlement scams. -- For businesses who may have already begun the claims filing process with BP, first, make sure you are dealing with authorized representatives from BP and not scam artists; and be careful not to sign waivers of liability too quickly without getting adequate legal and financial counsel.

- In all circumstances, affected businesses should file a claim with BP via the hotline number – 1-800-440-0858. Additional guidance to help small businesses survive a disaster can be found at www.MyFloridaCFO.com or by calling 1-850-413-3089 or toll-free at 1-877-MY-FL-CFO (1-877-693-5236).

Volunteer Opportunities:

- The Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service is encouraging Floridians and visitors to watch for oiled wildlife, vegetation, and beaches by becoming a Coast Watch volunteer.
- The “Coast Watchers” will assist BP, the state of Florida and partnering organizations in identifying beaches that need attention.
- Coast Watchers will work within the coastal communities where they live or visit and commit to do the following:
 - Report injured or oiled animals to the Wildlife Distress Hotline: 1-866-557-1401.
 - Report oiled shoreline to: 1-866-448-5816.
 - Report a change in Air Quality to: <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>.
 - For information on scheduled beach cleanups and other volunteer opportunities, visit www.VolunteerFlorida.org.
- BP has established a volunteer program and set up a toll-free number for those interested in volunteering. When calling, interested parties should communicate what activities they are volunteering and locations in which they are available to work. In addition, potential volunteers may call this line to learn about the training that is required to work in oil spill clean-up operations. For information on assisting with the response efforts, please contact BP’s community information line at 1-866-448-5816.

Learn More:

- DEP launched a Twitter account, [@FLDEPalert](https://twitter.com/FLDEPalert), dedicated to providing updates on Florida’s response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Visit www.Twitter.com/FLDEPalert.
- On May 3, the Florida Emergency Information Line was activated in response to deepwater horizon incident. The hotline, which provides Floridians information regarding the Deepwater Horizon Response, will operate from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. until further notice. The number for residents to call is: 1-800-342-3557.

- For more information DEP established an email sign-up for information alerts on its website as well as a resources page containing fact sheets and tips pertaining to health, safety, wildlife, and pre and post-landfall preparations. To view tips and sign up for email updates, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon.
- The following is a link to the State Emergency Response Team Situation Report for Wednesday, May 5, 2010:
http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/files/situation_report7_050510.pdf.

Joint Information Center Public Information Resources and Hotlines:

- Environment/community hotline: to report oil on the beach or shoreline or other environment or community impacts and access the Rapid Response Team – 1-866-448-5816.
- Wildlife: to report and access care for impacted wildlife 1-866-557-1401.
- Volunteers: to request volunteer information 1-866-448-5816.
- Services – to register as a consultant, contractor, vendor, or submit information on alternative response technology, services, products or suggestions 1-281-366-5511.
- Vessels of Opportunity – to report and register boats available to assist with response 1-281-366-5511.
- Claims - All claims regardless of amount should be routed through the Claims line for assignment of Claim Number. Claims will be tracked so status can be provided. 1-800-440-0858.
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/RobertLAJIC>.
- Facebook: [Deepwater Horizon Response](#).
- Joint Information Center website: www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com.

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