

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

ABSTRACT
for the
FRESHWATER SPILLS SYMPOSIUM, MARCH 2000

COAL TAR SPILL AT KOPPERS INDUSTRIES, INC., STICKNEY, ILLINOIS
by Karen A. Vendl
U.S. EPA, Region V, Chicago

On September 8, 1995, Koppers Industries, Inc. discovered a spill of crude coal tar from the Koppers Stickney Terminal in Stickney, Illinois. This spill resulted in approximately 17,000 gallons of coal tar/coal tar mixture being discharged into the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. The release was caused by a mechanical failure of a welded cap on an 8-inch transfer pipeline.

The resulting cleanup, which was performed by Koppers Industries, Inc., was difficult due to the physical characteristics of the coal tar. Unlike most oils which are lighter than water, most of the coal tar settled through the water column and accumulated on the bottom of the canal. Consequently, dredging-type cleanup techniques were employed for the cleanup. These included diver-assisted dredging and dredging from a specially designed barge.

All dredged material was first processed through API separators to remove the coal tar and sediment from the water. The wastewater was then processed through Koppers on-site wastewater treatment plant. During the cleanup action, approximately 83.5 million gallons of water was treated and discharged into the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

The coal tar and sediment was disposed of as non-hazardous waste at a landfill. During the cleanup, approximately 7.8 million pounds of material was disposed of.