

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**Statement by EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson from Press  
Conference on Dispersant Use in the Gulf of Mexico with US  
Coast Guard Rear Admiral Landry  
May 24, 2010**

- Thank you for joining us. Let me take a moment to thank Admiral Landry for joining us today and for all the work she and all of our Coast Guard responders have been doing.
- They have shown extraordinary resolve in leading this effort. EPA is glad to be in partnership with them.
- Today we want to talk about three elements of our ongoing response and some of the adjustments we are making to this changing situation. But let me first outline what the situation is.
- The BP spill has thrust upon us what could potentially be one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. More than 20,000 federal responders are continuing their work on creative solutions. Hundreds of EPA staff are focused on this crisis.

- In responding to this spill we have had to make some tough decisions – including the use of dispersant chemical to break up the oil and speed its natural degradation.
- Due to the unprecedented nature of this event, BP has used dispersants in ways never seen before. That is in terms of both the amount applied — which is approaching a world record — and in the method of application.
- A little more than a week ago EPA and the Coast Guard authorized, after testing for effectiveness, a novel use of dispersants underwater at the source of the leak.
- With that authorization, we required the implementation of a rigorous monitoring system, a condition that will ensure that underwater application continues to be effective and track any measurable environmental impacts.

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- Under the circumstances, the overall results to-date are positive. Our tracking indicates that the dispersants are breaking up the oil and speeding its bio degradation, with limited environmental impact at this time.
- In other words, dispersants continue to be the best of two very difficult choices. Their use inevitably means that we are making environmental trade-offs.
- But in all of this, it is critical to remember that the Number One enemy is the oil. Until we find a way to stem the flow of oil, we must continue to take any responsible action that will mitigate the impact of the spill. That is what we are doing.
- The steps we have taken are in full recognition of our tradeoffs.
  - We know that dispersants are less toxic than oil.
  - We know that surface use of dispersants decreases the risks to shorelines and organisms at the surface.

- And we know that dispersants breakdown over weeks rather than remaining for several years as untreated oil might.
- After testing and authorizing dispersant use underwater, we also remain optimistic that we are achieving similar results with the use of less chemicals.

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- We have put in place an extensive monitoring network to ensure the health of the air and water here. We have numerous stationary and mobile air monitors throughout the region – including a mobile unit that I personally inspected and toured today.
- To ensure the fullest level of transparency, all of the data we collect is being posted on [www.epa.gov/bpspill](http://www.epa.gov/bpspill) as soon as we gather and analyze it.

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- We are still deeply concerned about the things we don't know. The long-term effects on aquatic life are still unknown and we must make sure that the dispersants that are used are as non-toxic as possible.
- Those unknowns – and the lengthening period of this crisis – are why we last week directed BP to look for more effective, less toxic alternative to their current dispersant. We felt it was important to ensure that all possible options were being explored, in the hopes that we might minimize the environmental tradeoffs in whatever ways possible.
- It's also why we have called on BP to be more transparent about their own processes. We have directed them to share information with the American people, who certainly deserve to know what actions we are taking.
- Which brings me to the three points we are here to discuss today.

- First, the federal government, led by the Coast Guard, is today instructing BP to take immediate steps to significantly scale back the overall use of dispersants.

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- Throughout this process, EPA and the Coast Guard have reserved the authority, in particular, to discontinue the use of underwater dispersants.
- As of today, our data demonstrates that subsea dispersant application is having an effect on the oil at the source of the leak – and thus far has had no significant ecological impact. That’s the good news. And we continue to monitor both whether the oil is being dispersed effectively and the impact of dispersant on the environment.
- But given our concerns over the environmental unknowns, we think it is prudent at this time to ramp down overall use of dispersants.

- This is possible because sub sea use appears to be having a positive effect. As a result, we should use no more dispersant than is necessary. By ramping down on the amount of dispersant used, particularly on the surface where we expect less un-dispersed oil because of the sub sea application, we believe we can reduce the amount of dispersant applied by as much as half, and possibly more.
- We will continue to track the effectiveness of this response. Admiral Landry of course reserves command control to decide if it makes sense to resume broader uses of dispersant.
- Second, we have made it clear to BP, including in a meeting Admiral Landry and I held with company officials last night, that we are not satisfied that BP done an extensive enough analysis of other dispersant options. We expect BP to keep evaluating other alternative dispersants.



- BP's response to our directive was insufficient, and we are concerned that BP seemed, in their response, more interested in defending their initial decisions than analyzing possible better options.
- So today we are calling on them to continue searching and studying better possible dispersant options.

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- Third, as a result of being dissatisfied with the response, and to ensure that we know everything we can know about the current environmental impact, EPA will be performing our own scientific verification of the data BP presented. We will conduct our own tests to determine the least toxic, most effective dispersant available in the volumes necessary for a crisis of this magnitude. Our toxicity tests will address the claims and conclusions put forth by BP in their response to us late last week. And EPA scientists have been tasked with conducting parallel, independent tests to determine if BP's argument that

Corexit remains the best alternative is accurate and supported by the science.

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- In the meantime, we will continue to do all we can to address this crisis in the most aggressive and responsible way possible. We will continue to aggressively monitor air quality, water quality and the effect of dispersants used by BP.
- This is unfortunately a tragic situation that presents a grave threat to the environmental, ecological and economic future of the Gulf region – a region I call home.
- The EPA and the entire federal government continue to work around-the-clock to do everything possible to ensure both that the citizens of the Gulf region are protected and that BP is putting every resource at their disposal toward stopping this leak.
- Thank you very much.

