

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Government Response to the BP Oil Spill

View up-to-date information on the Gulf Coast at <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill>

WASTE, TRASH & DISPOSAL

July 2010

Where does all that oil, oiled waste and trash go?

In response to the oil spill, BP has set up a waste management program much like those in many American cities and towns. Each day waste is picked-up from lots of locations, carried to a central location where it is sorted, and then sent for recycling or disposal.

Workers pick-up waste from beaches, marshes and coastal waters every day. Most of this waste is oiled sand, oiled vegetation or clean-up materials used by the workers (oiled sponges, towels, rags).

Some of the waste is typical trash like that from any job site (bags, bottles, litter). This trash is separated and taken to a permitted landfill. Recyclable trash is separated and sent to local recycling centers.

Oiled waste from these different locations is taken to nearby staging areas. Here - the waste is sorted and wastes of the same kind are combined into a large shipment. Shipments are tested to decide where they should be sent for disposal.

Workers also replace oiled boom along the coastal areas or used by boats. Some boom can be washed to remove oil and reused several times.

Oiled boom and even small oiled boats also come to staging areas to be washed so they can be reused. These staging areas have equipment similar to a car wash and they collect dirty water and oil so it can be treated.

The remaining dirty water is filtered to remove more oil and sent to a local waste-water treatment plant. If test results indicate that the dirty water can't go to the city's plant, it is trucked off to a permitted liquid disposal facility where it is injected deep underground. Old filters have to be sent to a permitted landfill.

State Environmental Agency and EPA personnel visit the temporary staging areas to make sure BP is doing a good job and their operations comply with the law.



BP is required to test waste for toxicity. EPA is also conducting its own independent tests of waste. So far, none of the waste samples have exhibited hazardous characteristics.

The sorted waste is trucked to permitted landfills that have been approved by the state to take oiled waste. Private companies run these landfills as businesses and charge companies to use them.

Since these landfills are private businesses – State and EPA personnel are also visiting them to make sure they are doing a good job and following the law.

BP is responsible for making sure waste is collected and disposed of correctly. The company is paying workers to collect the waste as well as paying for the disposal. The US Coast Guard is the lead for the response and cleanup. Both your State Environmental Agency and EPA are helping the Coast Guard inspect and watch clean-up work and disposal of waste.

US Coast Guard and EPA have outlined additional requirements for BP including that BP share information about the amounts, types and destination of waste and setting up a complaint system for people to contact. Coast Guard, States and EPA believe everyone should have up-to-date and accurate information.

BP information is available at <http://www.bp.com/GulfOfMexicoResponse> or by calling their hotline at 1-866-448-5816.

The results of EPA's waste testing and site visits are available on our Web sites at: <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/waste.html>

Report an oiled shoreline at 1-866-448-5816 or oiled wildlife at 1-866-557-1401.

Contact the Joint Information Center at 713-323-1670 or visit <http://www.RestoreTheGulf.gov>.