



Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services

TEJAS STATEMENT
HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL – CHEMICAL BARGE SPILL

May 10, 2019

At around 3:30pm East of Barbour's Cut a 775-ft tanker Genesis River and the tug Voyager which was carrying two barges collided each one carrying 25,000 barrels of product. One of the barges capsized and the other was severely damaged leaking reformate into Galveston Bay. The Galveston County Office of Emergency Management (GCOEM) has confirmed that a barge containing reformate. The collision occurred south of Morgan's Point in the Houston Ship Channel. The United States Coast Guard is taking the lead on emergency response and Galveston County is assisting with all resources that may be requested.

Reformate is a chemical that is used as a blending additive to gasoline. It is flammable and toxic if inhaled, comes into contact with skin or is ingested.

Current air monitoring is being reported from the Port of Houston and Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (CTEH is a contractor which also did air monitoring during the ITC fire). Preliminary air monitoring reports coming from air monitoring resources in cities of Kemah and Clear Lake Shores are not showing any actionable levels of concern in air quality. Some residents are reporting a strong smell of gasoline.

Galveston County is stating that preliminary readings show no actionable levels, but if you are experiencing the smell of gasoline and are concerned, it is recommended that you use your best judgement and stay inside and avoid the coastlines along Kemah, Clear Lake Shores, Bacliff, San Leon, and League City, especially if you have any pre-existing health conditions.

Update from United States Coast Guard, K.D. Oditt Captain of the Port:

The U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston Captain of the port has established an emergency temporary safety zone and closure of Clear Creek Channel From the entrance to Clear Lake extending east to **Light 66** on the Houston Ship Channel and north up to but not including the Bayport Ship Channel. This emergency safety is required to protect persons, property, and infrastructure from potential damage and safety hazards associated with two barges. Please be advised that this closure coincides with additional closure the Houston Ship Channel between **Light 61 and 75, as established by VTS Houston/ Galveston.**

The U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port is working in close coordination with local and state authorities to continuously evaluate the Houston Ship Channel and affected waterways to reassess the status of the closures and will continue to update mariners. Local residents should continue to follow any direction provided by the County Officials.

For these and additional concerns Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services urges residents within the vicinity of concern or beyond and smell to evacuate and seek safety from friends and family further from the area. There is no exact idea over the area of exposure to these toxic chemical substances. If you remain inside the vicinity of concern or beyond and smell gasoline, please Shelter-In-Place. T.e.j.a.s is not a government agency or county entity to mandate evacuation. We are a 501c3 registered environmental justice advocacy nonprofit, that seeks to educate and inform communities on environmental issues of concern.

What does Shelter-In-Place mean?

Go inside immediately. Close and secure all doors and windows securely with plastic tarp between 4-6mil in thickness and secure with duct tape. Turn off all ventilation systems (air conditioning, heating). Listen to the radio or television and in this instance. It is important to consider the temperature conditions. Official SIP is declared by county and local officials. (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services is not a government entity)

Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (T.e.j.a.s.) is a 501c3 registered nonprofit, dedicated to providing community members with the tools necessary to create sustainable, environmentally healthy communities by educating individuals on health concerns and implications arising from environmental pollution, empowering individuals with an understanding of applicable environmental laws and regulations and promoting their enforcement, and offering community building skills and resources for effective community action and greater public participation.

Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services | 6731 Harrisburg Blvd. Houston, Texas 77011 | Tejasbarrios.org



Sources:
Galveston County, Texas

Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston, Marine Safety Information Bulletin 39-19
Closure of Clear Creek Channel 5/10/19

Image: US National Weather Service Houston-Galveston Texas

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