

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

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USA, KS, WICHITA, NEODESHA

APRIL 18 2004.

OIL AND WATER - UNDERGROUND POLLUTION AND RAMPANT HEALTH PROBLEMS HAVE LEAD NEODESHA TO SUE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST OIL COMPANY. BUT THE FIGHT ISN'T BETWEEN JUST THE TOWN AND THE CONGLOMERATE, IT'S BETWEEN TOWNSPEOPLE AS WELL.

By Dion Lefler

Marcus Baker looks like any ordinary 9-year-old boy -- until he lifts his shirt.

Scars criss-cross his chest and abdomen from open heart surgery and a liver transplant he needed to correct birth defects.

His mother, Susan Baker, has been touched by more unusual illnesses in her 35 years than most people see in a lifetime. In addition to Marcus' surgeries, Susan has diabetes; her first baby was stillborn; her first husband died of cancer at 26; and Marcus' twin sister failed to develop in the womb -- all while she lived in Neodesha.

Susan Baker thinks the cancer and birth defects may be related to groundwater and soil pollution left by an oil refinery that operated in this southeast Kansas town from the late 1800s until 1970.

"There's been so much sickness in this town, it's unreal," she said. "I'm not a real educated person, but anybody who has any common sense knows something's wrong here."

Families like the Bakers are the main reason that this town of 2,800 is taking the world's biggest oil company, BP PLC, to court.

The lawsuit, filed by city government, seeks to accelerate an ongoing cleanup of the pollution along with compensation for the city and potentially hundreds of affected residents.

Although the lawsuit addresses only economic harms, community health is "the basis of the case," said John Edgar, a lawyer representing the city.

"There are dangerous toxins under the city and that's what we're trying to address," he said.

BP officials concede the refinery damaged the town's environment and have an agreement with the state to clean it up.

They say extensive testing has shown there's no current health threat. The pollution is trapped below ground where people simply can't get at it.

"The contamination is there, but it doesn't pose a health risk to people," said BP spokesman Ron Rybarczyk. "We've gone door to door to make sure people are not drinking from the contaminated groundwater."

A health report recently released by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry classified the refinery site as "an indeterminate health hazard."

"We really think we need more information on the site," said Shawn Blackshear, an environmental scientist for the federal agency.

The report called for additional air testing, particularly indoors, to ensure that chemicals underground are not migrating into homes.

A BP consultant recently completed a round of indoor air testing that came up clean, according to the

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company and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, which supervised the testing.

Blackshear said his agency wants to study the conditions of the testing before making any judgments on it.

Plume of chemicals

Neodesha is nestled on a fertile plain near the confluence of the Fall and Verdigris rivers, not far from the cabin that was the setting for Laura Ingalls Wilder's book "Little House on the Prairie."

On the surface, it looks like a lot of Kansas country towns: a bustling industrial park; a one-stoplight Main Street; fliers advertising the Coon Hunters Club trading days --"dogs, poultry, guns, flea market, etc."

The problem lies beneath the surface.

A chemical plume of benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene pollutes the groundwater under a large part of the community. All four chemicals, known collectively as BTEX, are hazardous to humans. Benzene is one of only a few substances classified by the government as a known human carcinogen.

The contamination was mostly caused by the now-defunct refinery, started in 1897 by John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Co. Hot spots of lead contamination have also been found, most of them remnants from an old smelter operation bought by the oil company and turned into a dumping ground for refinery waste.

Pam Chaffee, an environmental geologist and the project manager for KDHE, said the groundwater contamination plume has two distinct lobes -- one under the industrial park on the old refinery site and a second that extends east under homes in town.

Most of the BTEX in the residential area came from a lightning-caused fire in 1968 at the refinery tank farm, she said.

The part of the plume under the industrial park contains similar chemicals, but is believed to be the cumulative effect of many small spills over the years. "There's nothing we're aware of there that was catastrophic," Chaffee said.

North of the tank farm, where the waste pond was, waste was chemically treated and capped with clay to keep rainwater from carrying it into the ground. The cap, installed in the mid-1980s, sprung leaks and was extensively restored in 2000, Chaffee said.

In the southern part of the site, investigators are trying to track the source of petrochemicals that have shown up in an oil/water separator that was part of the refinery's waste system.

Stormwater funnels through the separator on its way to the Fall River. It's upstream from the inlet where the city draws its drinking water, but tests have shown no elevated levels of hazardous chemicals in the city water system, said Kurt Limesand, a unit chief with KDHE's Bureau of Environmental Remediation.

Hazard uncertain

When the refinery closed in 1970, Amoco gave the site to the city, which developed the industrial park.

A city softball field and a day-care center for children and mentally disabled adults were also built there.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's health report said the agency "did not find soil contaminants at levels that would be dangerous to children playing in these areas."

However, it added, "The Neodesha refinery does have other areas that may be dangerous for children to play in... children must be limited to playing only in the areas designated for their use."

The agency has repeatedly recommended preventing public access to the waste-pond area and the former tank farm site. The tank farm site has a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire, but gates are open and there are several breaks in the fence. The waste-pond area is surrounded by a three-rail wooden fence.

KDHE says that's sufficient and that there is little health threat from occasional trespassing.

"That's an area where we disagree," said Blackshear of the federal agency.

BP, formerly known as British Petroleum, is the successor company to Standard Oil and Amoco Corp., which operated the refinery for 73 years. BP inherited the contamination problem when it acquired Amoco in 1998.

BP has drilled down into the tainted groundwater and runs a small treatment plant to pump it to the surface, clean it and discharge it into the Verdigris River.

Company spokesman Rybarczyk said BP has taken 1,785 barrels of contaminants out of the groundwater and removed some of the lead-contaminated soil.

BP also is experimenting with new technology to inject magnesium sulfate, better known by the common name Epsom salt, to foster growth of underground bacteria that consume BTEX.

An eight-inch-thick risk assessment, performed by a consultant hired by BP, concluded there is no threat to human beings "under current and reasonably foreseeable future exposure scenarios."

Bernard Goldstein, dean of the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh and one of nation's leading experts on environmental toxins, agreed that tainted groundwater doesn't pose a threat if people

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aren't exposed to it.

The depth of the water table is the crucial factor, he said.

"If they have basements that get wet (from groundwater seepage) during the rainy season, you're basically going to get offgassing of BTEX into basements," he said.

On the other hand, he said, if the water table is too low, BTEX-consuming bacteria won't survive no matter how much Epsom salt BP injects into the groundwater.

Edgar said the city is hiring its own experts to review the environmental work done by BP's consultant.

"It's no surprise that (BP) is going to have a report that says everything's fine," he said.

'It's kind of spooky'

With about 2,800 residents, Neodesha is too small for government scientists to determine whether disease rates are too high or not.

According to a government e-mail in December 2002, the University of Kansas Cancer Registry said Neodesha's rate of leukemia, the cancer most closely linked to benzene, worked out to about 17 cases per 100,000 residents. The same e-mail said the rate statewide was 11 cases per 100,000.

Rates for lung cancer also were higher, 81 per 100,000 for Neodesha compared with 59 per 100,000 for the state.

Prostate cancer, Hodgkin's Disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma were lower than state averages, the e-mail said.

But those rates were not made public and were not used in the federal health consultation.

Because Neodesha is so small, the statistics could not be validly compared to other communities, Blackshear said.

In an effort to broaden the population base, the Cancer Registry provided regional averages that did not show elevated cancer rates.

However, those statistics are also questionable, because Neodesha makes up only about 1.5 percent of the population of the cancer surveillance region, which includes nine counties and 177,000 people.

"It doesn't really answer the question of whether (Neodesha) has a high rate," said Linda Cowan, a research professor of epidemiology and biostatistics with the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

Cowan said the cancer rates for Neodesha should be studied over a long period of time to get the best picture of what the health situation really is.

Over the past decade, Neodesha has consistently ranked No. 3 or 4 in five-year death-rate statistics published by KDHE.

A high death rate is usually an indicator of an aging population. But Neodesha has the lowest median age, 37.1, and the lowest percentage of senior citizens 65 and older, 20 percent, of any community in the top 10 for death rate, according to Wichita Eagle research using census data.

"That's disturbing," said City Manager Joe Kerby.

Blackshear said he was unaware of the death statistics. "It looks like that needs some further looking into," he said.

Some residents say the problem is evident whether it can be proven statistically or not.

The Lutkey family has the closest residential property to the tank farm where much of the pollution originated.

Four generations of the clan were represented at Debbie Rhodes' 47th birthday party last month. Each generation has had brushes with diseases.

Rhodes was diagnosed a year ago with multiple sclerosis. Her father died two years ago of lung cancer. Her grandmother has brain cancer. Her brother is being tested for headaches and dizziness and his daughter is being tested for MS.

Several neighbors also have battled cancer, Rhodes said.

"There's a lot of illness all in this block," she said. "It's kind of spooky."

Not far away, things are looking up at the home of Debbie Johnson. Her 9-year-old daughter Jessica's leukemia has gone into remission after 2 ½ years of chemotherapy.

Johnson said she doesn't know if contamination had anything to do with her daughter's illness, but she feels strongly that BP has a responsibility to Neodesha.

"I don't understand all of it," she said. "It just seems like if they made the mess, they ought to have to clean it up."

Across town, 3-year-old Bayden Ellis is watching Barney the dinosaur. He's also in remission from

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leukemia. Not long ago, he was so sick that even giving him a bath would raise bruises.

When she was pregnant, Bayden's mother, Trisha, worked for New Beginnings, the day-care center on the refinery site.

"If I knew that was part of the site, I would never have worked there and I sure wouldn't have had my kids there," she said.

Bayden's too young to understand it all, but he does know one thing: "I'm gonna have another birthday."

Not everyone who has gotten sick blames the refinery. Ruby Reynolds, 59, said both she and her husband have had cancer, but "that doesn't mean it had anything to do with BP or Standard Oil -- cancer's everywhere."

Goldstein, the national expert on toxins, said some of the diseases that worry Neodesha residents can be caused by BTEX and some can't.

He said benzene is absolutely known to cause leukemia. It has been linked in some studies to birth defects, although the evidence is not as strong. There is no known link between the components of BTEX and multiple sclerosis.

And even if benzene is at fault, that doesn't necessarily mean it came from the refinery site. People are exposed to benzene daily from such sources as cigarette smoke and auto exhaust, he said.

A community divided

Taking on big oil represents a historic policy shift for Neodesha.

The first producing oil well west of the Mississippi -- predating "Texas tea" or "Oklahoma crude" -- was drilled here in 1892. The town's museum is devoted to the oil industry and a full-scale replica of that first well, Norman No. 1.

Generations of city officials have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Standard, Amoco and BP, denying problems and celebrating the companies' contributions to the community.

Mayor J.D. Cox said he's under lawyer's orders not to discuss details of the lawsuit, but wishes he could.

"Fairness is a two-way street and there are responsibilities here that need to be owned up to," he said.

The Wilson County Commission voted unanimously not to join the city's suit.

Commissioner DeWayne Prosser, who served on a committee that negotiated with BP, said Neodesha decided to sue only after trying unsuccessfully to squeeze BP to pay for public improvements that aren't related to the contamination.

There is some evidence for that. In 2002, a city letter requested that BP pay for \$620,000 in sewer improvements after the company sought permission to discharge treated water through the sewer.

"BP's acceptance of these cost factors would allow us to have a mutually advantageous agreement," the letter said. "We would be better positioned to be able to take such an agreement to our citizens as justification for our allowance of your request."

BP declined to pay and was denied permission to use the sewer.

Reynolds, the wife of the city fire chief, said she thinks Neodesha's budget problems prompted the lawsuit. "They're broke and BP's a big company."

There is no doubt that the lawsuit has been divisive

"There's a lot of emotion involved in this," said Lucille Campbell, a retired schoolteacher with a wheelchair and an attitude who heads up a citizens group called NEAT -- Neodesha Environmental Awareness Team. She is a prolific writer of letters to the editor and has kept the issue in front of the public for several years.

Her stand has cost her friends and even her church, which is pastored by Prosser.

"Standard Oil was like God when I was growing up," she said. "People down here are still loyal to Standard Oil."

One of the most loyal is 89-year-old Al Goering, a former member of the City Commission who also served on the county hazardous waste board.

"I've got a little different angle to this than that stupid woman who's trying to cause trouble," said Goering. "They (BP) have already cleaned it up as far as I'm concerned."

Goering calls the city's lawsuit ridiculous.

"Suppose they win the lawsuit -- which I don't think they've got a... chance in hell of doing -- what will they win?"

Edgar replied that what the city government wants is justice. "We want to bring the city back to what it should be, without the contamination."

<http://www.kansas.com/mld/eagle/8457994.htm>

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USA, MA, WOBURN

APRIL 28 2004.

GASOLINE FLOWS INTO HORN POND AFTER SPILL - OFFICIALS: WELLS AROUND TO STAY SHUT DOWN UNTIL THIS WEEKEND

By Michael Marotta

Officials: Wells around to stay shut down until this weekend

Water wells around Woburn will be shut down through the weekend as city officials continue to assess the damage from Monday morning's gas spill at the Prime Energy gas station near Horn Pond.

Just less than 200 gallons of gasoline spilled from a company truck filling the underground tank at the Pleasant Street gas station around 10 a.m., which is located on a groundwater protection zone, when the driver failed to notice the hose from the tank to the truck disconnected.

"Someone was driving by and he saw the gas shooting up into the street," said Health Agent Jack Fralick.

The gasoline, with the help of rainwater that was building up in the streets, flowed down into the storm drains and catch basins, through the brook that runs between Woburn Parkway and Water Street and into Horn Pond.

Fralick said Well I was immediately shut down and the other wells soon followed "as a precautionary measure."

Pleasant Street was shut down from Water Street to Warren Avenue as DPW crews and the Health and Fire Departments spread sand along Ellis Street, where much of the gas fell into the basins. "Diapers," which absorb gasoline but let water pass through it, were also used on the streets and booms were spread down the brook and on Horn Pond. City officials as well as North East Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council and the state Department of Environmental Protection also arrived at the scene and helped with the station cleanup and took to Horn Pond by boat to cast booms that corralled the spilled gasoline.

Clean Harbors and Atlantic Power Wash, both based in Woburn, also helped with the cleanup.

Fire Chief Paul Tortolano said because of the responsiveness of the cleanup crews and city officials, there was not and will not be a health risk to Woburn residents.

"It's not going to affect the water at all," Tortolano said. "It looks like it's a lot, especially when it's raining because the gas floats, but I wouldn't think (it'll affect the water) because of the quick response and cleanup... So far everything has turned out very good."

By the end of the day Monday, all the manholes and the brook were flushed out, according to Police Chief Philip Mahoney. All the remaining gas was pushed down the brook and into the pond where it was quarantined.

"Everything should work out fine," Mahoney said. "It's wasn't a huge spill, it was under 200 gallons... Although it depends on who you ask, the owners of the gas station would say it was only 50 gallons."

Mahoney said testing will continue through the week, and residents should not experience a disruption in the water's flow or quality as Horn Pond also serves as an aquifer for the city's wells. During testing, water will be supplied by the MWRA.

"Because of everything we went through (in the past), we have a top notch water infiltration system," he said.

The Prime Energy gas station has been a fixture on Pleasant Street for decades, and therefore has been grandfathered into the area despite its location on a groundwater protection zone. According to Walt Kearney of Woburn Zoning, the station predates all the cities zoning laws and under current zoning laws, the station would not be allowed to operate in that area.

"That place has been there for 60, 70 years, and we've never had a spill before," Mahoney said.

http://www.townonline.com/woburn/news/local_regional/wob_newwogasspill04282004.htm

USA, IA, KEOKUK

APRIL 28 2004.

CHEMICAL SPILL DOESN'T REACH RIVER

By Matthew LeBlanc

Standing at the mouth of an underground pipe that had run red with chemicals from a spill just three days ago, state Department of Natural Resources environmental specialist Terry Jones described two area industries' efforts to contain the spill in just one word.

"Outstanding," he said Tuesday, his thigh-high rubber boots planted firmly on the bank of Soap Creek behind Griffin Wheel Co.

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Contractors hired by Griffin Wheel and Keokuk Steel Castings Co. worked Friday, Saturday and Sunday to contain about 280 gallons of a petroleum-based chemical that flowed into the creek some time earlier in the week from the foundry plant.

The chemical is believed to have leaked from a plastic container earlier in the week, and was washed into the creek by heavy rains. The spill spread over about 400 yards on Griffin Wheel property.

Jones, with fellow DNR environmental specialist Kurt Levetzow and Griffin Wheel Works Manager Mike St. Clair, toured the spill site Tuesday morning. What they found was clear water running through a narrow 2-foot channel toward a now-destroyed dam built over the weekend to contain the contaminated water.

"It was pure red," Jones said of the water's vermilion hue on Friday and Saturday. "(It's) the difference between night and day. We're lucky it wasn't a bigger body of water."

Investigators found dead snapping turtles, crayfish and worms Friday over several hundred yards of the creek, beginning at its headwaters near Keokuk Steel Castings, 3972 Main St. Officials found live worms and crayfish on Tuesday's tour, a sign Jones says is an indicator the spill was contained and adequately cleaned.

Iowa DNR spokesman Kevin Baskins said Saturday the chemical did not reach the Mississippi River and was not a threat to city drinking water, though a DNR-imposed fine on Keokuk Steel Castings is still possible. Officials hope to have soil samples detailing the extent of the contamination returned by Thursday or Friday.

A crew of about 11 worked from early morning to dusk Friday and Saturday, digging dirt from the creek bed and putting the contaminated soil into barrels and bags. A pump truck took water from the creek away from the spill site. Workers monitored the cleanup Sunday.

"We were able to isolate (contaminated) areas of the creek," St. Clair said. "Our guys took shovels and took up about an inch of dirt and cleaned all the dirt out."

The chemical had mixed with the water after rains over the weekend washed it into the creek. Absorbent booms remained at points on the serpentine creek Tuesday to catch existing contamination, but most seemed to be clean.

"Hopefully, it won't take long for the life to come back," Jones said.

Roger Courtney, vice president and general manager at Keokuk Steel Castings, estimated that "less than 100 gallons" of the chemical reached the creek. He said the source of the leak has been fixed.

Neither Courtney nor St. Clair could provide a cost estimate for the cleanup.

http://www.thehawkeye.com/daily/stories/ln16_0428.html

USA, GA, SAVANNAH

APRIL 28 2004.

GAS SPILL AT EAST SIDE PARKER'S

A person who drove away from a gas pump with the nozzle still in the vehicle caused a big mess overnight. About midnight, the clerk from the Parker's gas station on East Victory Drive called Savannah firefighters to report gas was spilling out of a pump.

The clerk was told to close the emergency cutoff valve, and when firefighters arrived, they found about nine gallons of fuel on the ground. Police and firefighters closed off the gas station, then haz-mat crews went to work cleaning up the spilled gas.

The station had to remain closed for about an hour during the cleanup. They're still looking for the driver who caused the mess.

<http://www.wtoctv.com/Global/story.asp?S=1821842&nav=0qq6Mev2>

USA, MA, EAST BRIDGEWATER

APRIL 28 2004.

E.B. GAS STATION REOPENS AFTER CLEAN-UP OF SPILL

By Jean Porrazzo

The AL Prime Energy gas station in the center of town has reopened after being closed by the fire chief because of a gasoline spill.

Police received a call from a passing motorist at 2:25 a.m. Sunday reporting a possible gasoline spill at the AL Prime station at 49 Central St.

Police alerted the Fire Department, which responded to the scene and found that a spill had occurred while a tanker truck was filling an underground tank at the station.

"We began to lay lines down in case it found an ignition source before we could get the spill contained,"

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Fire Chief Ryon T. Pratt said.

Pratt called in the Highway Department to bring sand to the site to be used as a barrier to contain the spill and to absorb the gasoline.

An estimated 20 to 30 gallons of gasoline was spilled, he said.

AL Prime Energy and the state Department of Environmental Protection were notified about the spill, Pratt said.

"Everyone was notified and responded," Pratt said. "In addition, I revoked their permit to operate."

The gas station requires a permit to store flammables, he said.

Pratt said there had been a number of concerns with the company over the years, but said he could not elaborate.

The gas station was not allowed to reopen until the cause of the spill had been determined.

Pratt and Deputy Chief Robert Fairburn conducted the investigation and determined the spill was caused by human error, Pratt said.

DEP issued a notice of responsibility to the company outlining the steps required by DEP to clean up the site, he said.

The gas station reopened for business at about 3 p.m. Monday.

Just hours before the East Bridgewater station reopened, hundreds of gallons of fuel leaked from a tanker truck making a delivery at an AL Prime gas station on Pleasant Street in Woburn.

The spill happened at 10:30 a.m. and according to news reports, officials and residents were concerned because the gas flowed into catch basins and some of it flowed into a nearby pond. The wells that supply 75 percent of Woburn's water are located next to the pond.

<http://enterprise.southofboston.com/articles/2004/04/28/news/news/news08.txt>

USA, SMITHTOWN, LONG ISLAND

APRIL 28 2004.

SEEKING ANSWERS ON GAS LEAK

By Theresa Vargas

They say it has seeped into their lives the last six years -- gasoline escaping from a cracked underground tank into their yards, water wells and eventually swimming pools.

A group of Smithtown residents now say they want answers from ExxonMobil, which the Department of Environmental Conservation lists as having had a gasoline leak in their neighborhood near Route 347 in 1998, and another last month.

"I just want them to tell the truth," resident Maureen Sartain said. "I don't know if we're living in a house full of fumes, I don't know."

Today, residents will meet with DEC officials and ExxonMobil representatives at 7 p.m. at the Branch Brook Elementary School on Ridgeley Road.

ExxonMobil and DEC officials did not return calls for comment Tuesday.

Sartain, whose 14-year-old son, Timothy, suffers from seizures and other illnesses, believes like other parents that the spill may be responsible for their children's learning disabilities and health problems.

Residents Sharon McKean, a mother of three who said at least one of her children has ailments, said she only found out in December about the spill. She first saw construction crews from ExxonMobil digging on her street in August, and then was part of a group that gathered more information from the state.

"I couldn't believe this was going on for so long and I was unaware of it," she said. "People were swimming in it, and watering their lawns, washing their cars, people were planting gardens with it."

"Now I'm worried what's my future for my children," she added, "what's going to show up 15 years from now? It's scary, very scary."

The DEC's Spills Incidents Database reports a spill of an unknown amount of gasoline at the Exxon gas station on Route 374 in September 1998 and another on March 23 at the Mobil gas station across the street. Both list groundwater as being affected. The DEC database shows nothing to indicate any health repercussions from the spills.

"How can they be cleaning it up when they're still spilling?" resident Dawn Madigan asked.

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She and other residents have hired a lawyer, and said they plan to sue.

"I don't care about the money," Madigan said. "Somebody should be able to come in and tell me it's OK to raise my kids here."

<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-lileak0428.0,3619596.story?coll=ny-linews-headlines>

USA CT, MIDDLETOWN

APRIL 28 2004.

MERIDEN MAN BURNED USING TORCH ON 55-GALLON DRUM

By Amy I. Zitka

A Meriden man remains hospitalized with serious burns he suffered Tuesday morning while working at a local manufacturer, and the incident is under investigation.

At approximately 9:59 a.m., South Fire District received a call about a fire and explosion at Jackson Corrugated Container at 225 River Road, South Fire District Chief Wayne Bartolotta said. While firefighters and emergency medical personnel were on their way to the corrugated shipping container manufacturer, they were advised that an outside operation was occurring where an acetylene torch was being used on 55-gallon drums and one exploded, he said.

John Arwood was cutting the tops off the drums for disposal, Bartolotta said. One drum that he was working on exploded resulting in Arwood catching fire, the chief said.

Arwood, 39, of 272 Broad St., suffered second- and third-degree burns to his legs, torso, hands and face, Bartolotta said. Arwood was flown by LifeStar helicopter to Bridgeport Hospital, he added.

Arwood was listed in fair condition Tuesday night in the hospital's burn center, Bridgeport Hospital spokesman John Cappiello said.

During the incident, the drum became a projectile, went 160 feet in the air and landed on the roof of Meadow Meat Co. Inc. at 17 Eastern Drive, Bartolotta said. No other injuries or fire was reported, the chief said.

The contents of the barrel are under investigation, but it has been preliminarily determined that it was an ink product, Bartolotta said.

The incident is under investigation by the South Fire District fire marshal, the Middletown Police and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Bartolotta said.

http://www.middletownpress.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=11398666&BRD=1645&PAG=461&dept_id=10856&rfti=6

USA, NY, SAUGERTIES

APRIL 28 2004.

SPILLED OIL FUELS ANGER NEAR SCHOOL

By Norma Jean Howland

An oil spill that surfaced last week at the Woodstock Day School has neighbors contemplating lawsuits against the private school.

Marcie Ogg, who moved to New Mexico two weeks ago, was contacted last week by the state Department of Environmental Conservation about the spill, which she said had spread onto her property adjacent to the school.

"It's a significant spill, between 800 and 1,000 gallons," Ogg said. "It leaked into an old gravel pit with wildlife. I don't know if it is in the water table."

Ogg said construction workers may have nicked an oil line while digging for the installation of a septic tank at the site of a new high school building.

"(School officials) are trying to bend over backwards to rectify the situation so I won't take legal action," said Ogg, who has contacted a lawyer. But she said the spill is just one in a series of problems she has encountered since construction started last summer.

"As soon as I knew (about the construction) I wanted out," Ogg said. "It was noise night and day. The school has been completely intrusive, with no regard for us. I had a beautiful back yard, looking out on meadows, and now I see a shiny metal roof."

Wendy Rosenbach, a spokeswoman for the Department of Environmental Conservation, said the spill was reported April 18 and temporary containment measures were taken.

Rosenbach said an investigation determined that an underground line for an underground fuel tank had leaked an estimated several hundred gallons of oil due to damage during construction last summer.

Ogg said she is trying to sell her property but has been advised to take it off the market due to the spill.

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"It's been a nightmare. All I want is to sell the house and live in peace," she said.

Chris Hale, whose property was also affected by the spill, said she has been advised by her lawyer to wait and see how the clean up goes before proceeding. Hale said the spill spread to a corner of her property and there was a distinct odor of oil in her back yard.

"Let's just say the Woodstock Day School has been less than ideal as neighbors," said Hale. "The expansion has made the last year troublesome."

Hale said the school wasn't forthcoming with neighbors about its expansion plans.

Ogg alleged that the school failed to get proper permits before proceeding with the construction, but Saugerties Planning Board Chairman William Creen said the school twice received town approval for the project.

Creen said the school, which is on Glasco Turnpike in Saugerties, was required to go before the Planning Board a second time due to changes in its original plan.

"We found out that they had changed the location and they had to go through the process a second time," he said.

Creen said public hearings were held, with the Planning Board acting as mediators between neighbors and the school.

At the time, several conditions, including fencing and planting, had been placed on the school, but it was not expected the items would be undertaken until spring. Creen said the building inspector planned to visit the school this week to check on its progress.

Andrea Moss, president of the board at Woodstock Day School, said the Department of Environmental Conservation "is basically taking care of (the spill) and there will be very little environmental impact.

"The DEC got it all contained," she said. "The bottom line is the DEC is on the scene with a cleanup. There is every expectation there will be no impact and all is being taken care of.

"The DEC explained that the wells are incredibly well encased and there is very little possibility of impact on the wells," said Moss.

Rosenbach said the Ulster County Health Department is sampling wells on the school property and some adjacent properties.

Moss said no one is using the school water while the tests are under way.

Rosenbach said the school is cooperating with the state agency and that the cleanup is expected to take about two weeks. There will be some long-term monitoring as a precautionary measure, she said.

"It sounds like all is progressing well," Rosenbach said.

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=1769&dept_id=74958&newsid=11397688&PAG=461&rfi=9

USA, SAN FRANCISCO

APRIL 30 2004.

LEAK NEAR SAN FRANCISCO CONTAINED

A diesel oil pipeline spill that polluted hundreds of acres of wetlands near the San Francisco Bay, which occurred on Tuesday but was not made public until Thursday, has been contained, officials said.

A pipeline belonging to energy company Kinder Morgan Energy Partners leaked diesel oil on Tuesday night, affecting between 300 and 600 acres of marshland near Suisun Bay north of San Francisco, Coast Guard spokesman Glynn Smith said.

Officials said they did not know how much fuel had leaked and it was not clear why news of the spill did not become publicly known until Thursday. The Coast Guard arrived at the scene at about 4 p.m. on Wednesday, nearly a full day after the spill, Smith said.

"The original spill began approximately 7 p.m. PDT (10 p.m. EDT) on Tuesday and the computerized system that monitors the line that Kinder Morgan has detected a problem in the pipeline," Smith said. "The valves on either side of the breach were closed and Kinder Morgan sent out a crew."

Kinder Morgan Partners, controlled by Houston-based pipeline operator Kinder Morgan Inc., is the nation's largest pipeline master limited partnership.

Smith said that hot sun had helped evaporate much of the leaked diesel fuel since the spill.

"Yesterday, you could see a sheen on the water," the Coast Guard official said. "The folks coming back from the scene today are all telling me that you can't see anything, it's a hot day, a sunny day, and diesel is evaporating."

Kinder Morgan spokesman Jerry Engelhardt said the 14-inch diameter pipeline, which is buried under Suisun Bay adjacent to the San Francisco-Sacramento railroad line, was shut down after the problem was detected.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

Another spokesman Larry Pierce said the source of the leak in the welded steel pipe was discovered on Wednesday between 1:30 and 2 p.m. in a marsh area.

"We are confident that we have contained the release; it is an area that has been boomed off," Pierce said. "At this time there is no indication whatsoever that any product has been released to either San Francisco Bay or the Suisun slough."

The pipeline carries diesel and jet fuels and gasoline from refineries in the San Francisco Bay Area to Sacramento and points east and north.

Experts said it would be unusual for news of an oil leak to be kept two days from the public, especially in an environmentally sensitive area.

"That's a violation of what I understand the protocol for handling oil spills is supposed to be," said Mary Nichols, director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of California at Los Angeles. "Normally there are announcements made right away."

Kinder Morgan spokesman Pierce could not explain the delay in informing the public.

Speaking about diesel fuel, Nichols, a former secretary of the California Resources Agency added: "That's the most toxic petroleum product that could be spilled, especially in a sensitive habitat like Suisun marsh."

Suisun Bay, fed by the San Joaquin and Sacramento river delta, is home to one of the nation's largest inland estuarine wetlands, providing important habitat to water fowl, said Craig Noble, a spokesman for the environmental group the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Ronald Tjeerdema, a biologist at University of California at Davis, said diesel can kill fish and other marine life invertebrates by shutting down their nervous systems if the concentration high enough.

"Diesel is more water soluble than crude, but it also tends to evaporate quickly, especially when it is warm and windy like it is today," he said.

(Additional reporting by Leonard Anderson in San Francisco; Steve Gorman in Los Angeles; and Timothy Gardner in New York)

<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/24949/story.htm>

USA, SAN FRANCISCO

APRIL 30 2004.

COMPANY COULD BE PENALIZED AFTER CALIFORNIA FUEL LEAK

An energy company could face a fine or criminal penalty after failing to promptly report a diesel oil pipeline spill that polluted hundreds of acres of wetlands near the San Francisco Bay, an official said on Thursday.

The pipeline belonging to energy company Kinder Morgan Energy Partners leaked diesel oil on Tuesday night, affecting between 300 and 600 acres of marshland near Suisun Bay north of San Francisco, Coast Guard spokesman Glynn Smith said.

The assistant deputy administrator of California's Office of Spill Prevention & Response said officials learned of the spill, which has been contained, only a day later. The accident was made public around midday on Thursday.

"It certainly looks like they knew something was wrong 18 hours before they notified the authorities, and if something like that happens we expect a little more prompt notification than that," Bud Leland told Reuters.

He added Kinder Morgan could face a penalty of \$10,000 per day of delay in notification and possible criminal sanction.

Kinder Morgan spokesman Larry Pierce could not explain the delay in informing the public, but said authorities had been properly notified.

The Coast Guard arrived at the scene at about 4 p.m. on Wednesday, nearly a full day after the spill, Smith said.

"The original spill began at approximately 7 p.m. PDT (10 p.m. EDT) on Tuesday and the computerized system that monitors the line that Kinder Morgan has detected a problem in the pipeline," Smith said. "The valves on either side of the breach were closed and Kinder Morgan sent out a crew."

Kinder Morgan Partners, controlled by Houston-based pipeline operator Kinder Morgan Inc., is the nation's largest pipeline master limited partnership.

The firm estimated that 63,000 gallons of diesel had spilled into the marsh, five miles south of Fairfield, California. It said the pipeline was expected to be back in service on Saturday.

EVAPORATING DISASTER

Smith of the Coast Guard said that hot sun had helped evaporate much of the leaked diesel fuel since the

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

spill.

"Yesterday, you could see a sheen on the water," he said. "The folks coming back from the scene today are all telling me that you can't see anything, it's a hot day, a sunny day, and diesel is evaporating."

Kinder Morgan said the 14-inch (35.5 cm) diameter pipeline, which is buried under Suisun Bay adjacent to the San Francisco-Sacramento railroad line, was shut down after the problem was detected. Spokesman Pierce said the source of the leak in the welded steel pipe was discovered on Wednesday between 1:30 and 2 p.m. in a marsh area.

"We are confident that we have contained the release; it is an area that has been boomed off," Pierce said. "At this time there is no indication whatsoever that any product has been released to either San Francisco Bay or the Suisun slough."

The pipeline carries diesel and jet fuels and gasoline from refineries in the San Francisco Bay Area to Sacramento and points east and north.

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Ronald Tjeerdema, a biologist at University of California at Davis, said diesel can kill fish and other marine life invertebrates by shutting down their nervous systems if the concentration high enough. "Diesel is more water soluble than crude, but it also tends to evaporate quickly, especially when it is warm and windy like it is today," he said.

Officials reported that one beaver and one muskrat had died because of the leak. (Additional reporting by Leonard Anderson in San Francisco; Steve Gorman in Los Angeles; and Timothy Gardner in New York) <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/24950/story.htm>

USA, WI, WITTENBERG

APRIL 29 2004.

THREE INJURED IN WELDING SHOP BLAST

Three people were taken to Wausau Hospital Wednesday evening after an explosion and fire at a welding shop in Wittenberg.

According to officials, the explosion occurred during welding work on an oil tank at Erickson Welding, 300 Grand Ave., and injured owner Bob Erickson, one employee and one customer.

It was not clear Wednesday evening why the explosion occurred but Wittenberg Fire Department officials cited a possible failure of a carbon dioxide tank.

Fire department officials, who were still investigating the matter, did not have names immediately available of the two people beside Erickson who were injured. One was said to have suffered moderate injuries.

The extent of the other person's injuries were not known. Erickson was not seriously injured in the accident.

Wittenberg and Birnamwood fire departments and the Shawano County Sheriff's Department responded within minutes of the accident, which occurred at about 7 p.m. Wednesday.

The fire was contained to the welding shop and a trailer causing moderate damage, fire officials said. <http://www.shawanoleader.com/articles/2004/04/29/news/news2.txt>

SCOTLAND

APRIL 29 2004.

MAN KILLED IN WELDING 'BLAST'

By Caroline Gammell

A man welding the roof of a fuel tanker died today after fumes from the vehicle caught fire and exploded, the ambulance service said today.

The man was perched on the roof of the vehicle carrying out repairs when the incident happened.

Although the vehicle had been emptied of fuel, it is thought that the flame of the welder combusted with the leftover fumes.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

"The welder had a very hot flame and it would appear it ignited the fumes inside," an Essex ambulance spokesman said.

As a result of the explosion, the roof of the warehouse – where the vehicle was being stored – collapsed.

The incident was made worse by the fact that the roof contained asbestos, the ambulance spokesman said.

The man, who has not been identified, was certified dead at the scene by a police surgeon and is still at the site of the explosion.

All emergency crews working at the site have been forced to wear breathing apparatus and have to be fully decontaminated afterwards due to the asbestos.

The area has yet to be made safe as there are risks of secondary explosions, but no one else was thought to have been injured, the ambulance spokesman said.

Six ambulances and an air ambulance were called to the scene at Manor Road in West Thurrock in Essex at 2.42pm today.

A paramedic manager arrived at the incident and cancelled four of the ambulances and the air ambulance. One ambulance remains at the scene.

The injured man was thought to be working for a small two-man business which specializes in repairing articulated lorries and tankers.

<http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2857516>

AFGHANISTAN, AZIZ ABAD

MAY 2 2004.

AFGHAN BLAST AN 'ACCIDENT'

At least 25 people have been killed and 40 wounded when a fuel tank exploded in Afghanistan's western Herat province on Sunday following a welding accident in a village market, government officials said.

The blast ripped through a bazaar in the village of Aziz Abad along a highway in remote Shindand district not far from a US military base, said Ghulam Mohammad Masoan, spokesman for the provincial governor.

"It was an accident," he told Reuters. "A gas truck had some problem and the driver tried to weld it. That set off an explosion that triggered another explosion."

He said the truck was parked outside a mechanics shop in Aziz Abad and the blast sparked another explosion in a nearby fuel truck.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai's spokesman, Jawed Ludin, said at least 25 were killed and 40 wounded.

"It was negligence, an accident," Mr Ludin told Reuters.

Last month Mr Karzai sent 1,500 troops to the city of Herat, capital of the province, after fierce fighting sparked by the killing of the powerful provincial governor's son.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s1099713.htm>

AFGHANISTAN, AZIZ ABAD

MAY 3 2004.

AFGHANISTAN TANKER BLAST KILLS 34

At least 34 people died and scores more sustained severe burns when a petrol tanker exploded on a crucial road linking southern and north-western Afghanistan, officials said.

The petrol-laden truck blew up in the bazaar of Azizabad, in Shindand district in the far south of western Herat province, provincial police chief Zia-Ulldin Mahmodi said.

Although the exact cause of the accident is unknown, officials said the blast was caused by careless welding near the tanker.

"The truck explodes and the result is 31 people killed, 35 injured," Mahmodi said, speaking from Herat Public Health Hospital where many of the injured were taken after the blast in a shopping district.

"Probably half of the injured people will also die as their injuries are very bad, they have 100 per cent burns."

About 31 people had died at the scene while another three had succumbed to their injuries after arriving at Herat hospital, a humanitarian worker told AFP from the hospital where dozens of people had gathered for news on their relatives.

Twenty-six people were being treated for burns while other casualties were being dealt with at a clinic in Shindand, spokeswoman for French non-governmental organisation Medecins du Monde France, Valerie Gentner said.

Tank and Petroleum Use Mishaps

Gentner said the NGO had brought some medicine to the hospital but, like most of Afghanistan's medical facilities, it was not equipped to deal with the emergency.

"I can see around eight or nine casualties in the same room," she said.

"They are groaning. We have brought some drugs but they are still lacking bedsheets and bandages."

A statement from the office of President Hamid Karzai confirmed that at least 25 people had died and more than 40 were injured in the tragedy.

Karzai said he was "deeply saddened by the news of the terrible accident caused by a fuel explosion at a gas station in the district of Shindand, Herat, which resulted in the death of at least 25 and the wounding of over 40 people".

A spokesman for the Herat government, Qarim Massoom, told AFP that the accident was caused by welding near the tanker in Shindand, which is about 100km south of Herat.

"In the incident, between 50 and 100 people are killed and injured," Massoom added.

Another government source, who asked not to be named, confirmed that a truck carrying 18,000 litres of petrol had exploded in Shindand

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=5823>