

A growing list of oil spills in Canada and the United States

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, more than 10–25 million gallons of oil is spilled in the U.S. on average each year. It only takes one major oil spill, however, to double or triple the average amount spilled.

Below is a small sample of large oil spills in Canada and the United States during the past several decades:

November 16, 2017: Keystone Pipeline

In the third and largest Keystone oil spill in South Dakota, a total of 210,000 gallons of oil leaked from the Keystone Pipeline about three miles southeast of the town of Amherst.

Following the spill, the company reported that the pipeline was shutoff within minutes and no damage was made to the area. The incident occurred just days before Nebraska officials announce a decision on the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline.

October 11 - 12, 2017: Delta House oil spill

Touted as the biggest oil spill in the U.S since Deepwater Horizon disaster, a Delta House floating production facility located about 40 miles southeast of Venice, Louisiana, leaked 330,000 gallons of crude into the waters off Louisiana. The incident was reportedly caused by a fractured flowline jumper.

January 23, 2017: Tundra Energy Marketing Inc oils spill

A Tundra Energy Marketing pipeline spilled 200,000 liters (52,834 gallons) on aboriginal land near Stoughton, Saskatchewan. While the company reported that 170,000 liters had been recovered from the site within days, it is still unclear as to how the leak occurred.

May 7, 2017: Con Edison East River Oil Spill

Roughly 31,000 gallons of dielectric fluid (a type of oils used to prevent electrical charges) spilled from a ruptured transformer in Brooklyn. A total of 6,300 gallons was recovered from contaminated land and 520 gallons have been recovered from the water, however the Coast Guard reported more than 5,000 gallons of the spilled oil could have seeped into the nearby East River.

April 4, 2017: Dakota Access Pipeline Leak

A pipeline leaked caused by a mechanical failure spilled roughly 84 gallons of crude oil in South Dakota at a rural pump station on April 4. The spill was disclosed on the agency's website, but it gained little attention until The Associated Press reported the news.

December 5, 2016: Belle Fourche pipeline leak

A 6-inch steel Belle Fourche pipeline built in the 1980's spilled 176,000 gallons of crude oil along Ash Coulee Creek, about 150 miles from Dakota Access protest camp. Since 2006, Wyoming-based True Cos., which operates the Belle Fourche pipeline, have reported 36 spills totaling 320,000 gallons of petroleum products, most of which was never recovered.

October 6, 2016: Fox Creek pipeline leak

A pipeline owned and operated by the Calgary-based Trilogy Energy Corp. was discovered at their Kaybob Montney Oil project located approx. 15 kilometres northeast of Fox Creek. Trilogy Energy Corp. estimates a total of 250,000 litres of oil and water spilled over an area the size of three hectare before it was discovered in early October.

September 9 - 12, 2016: Colonial Pipeline Leak

A Colonial Pipeline leak, first discovered on Sept 9, 2016, spilled an estimated 350,000 US gallons of gasoline in the Colonial Pipeline in Shelby County, Alabama which caused gas shortages in six states in the Southeastern part of the United States.

According to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report, the leaking gasoline traveled overland for approx. 500 feet before spilling into a pond that feeds into Peel Creek, a tributary of the Cahaba River. It is not known how long the leak had been spilling gasoline before it was discovered. Two months later, an explosion is reported to have occurred at the same line at a site only miles distant.

July 21st, 2016: The North Battleford pipeline spill, Saskatchewan

On July 21, 2016, a pipeline leak spilled as much as 1,570 barrels of crude oil and chemicals into the North Saskatchewan River. The small city of North Battleford was forced to shut down their water treatment plant the next day. Officials don't know yet what caused the disaster.

June 29 - July 15, 2016: The Fort McMurray Oil Spill

On June 29, 2016, a pipeline leak was found just 35 kilometers southeast of Fort McMurray near Nexen Energy's Long Lake oil sands facility. Roughly five million litres of bitumen, sand and waste water spread over 16,000 square meters before the spill was discovered - roughly two weeks after the spill was suggested to have occurred.

June 9, 2016: ConocoPhillips Canada pipeline spill, Alberta

On June 9, 2016, a ConocoPhillips Canada pipeline was breached, spilling 380,000 litres of light petroleum into a creek near grizzly bear protection area in northwestern Alberta. The company said in a statement posted on its website that the leak was "condensate, a liquid produced with natural gas."

According to reporters, condensate was visible as a sheen on the surface of the creek for about 4.5 kilometres below the pipeline leak. The area was quickly fenced off from wildlife. No cause for the leak has been established yet.

May 12, 2016: The Brutus oil rig spill

On May 12, 2016, an undersea break on Shell's Brutus oil rig spilled 2,100 barrels of crude oil, roughly 88,200 gallons, into the Gulf of Mexico. The leak resulted in a 13-milelong oil slick roughly 100 miles south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana. The cause of the leak remains under investigation. The cost of the cleanup was estimated to be \$96 million by the company responsible.

May 19, 2015: Refugio oil spill

On May 19, 2015, an 28-year old underground Plains All American Pipeline - which was later found to be corroded - was ruptured near Refugio State Beach, spilling over 1480,000 gallons of crude oil, much of which ran down a ravine under a nearby freeway and entered the ocean at one of the most biologically diverse coastlines of the west coast. The pipeline has since been decommissioned.

The oil quickly spread along 7 miles (11 km) of coastline from Arroyo Hondo Creek to the west to El Capitán State Beach, reaching four marine protected areas, including: Naples, Kashtayit, Campus Point and Goleta Slough.

State parks and beaches located along the coastline were temporarily closed. Hundreds of animals along the coast were coated with the thick crude oil.

It was discovered later that much of the damage might have been preventable had the proper Safety mechanisms been in place, such as an automated shut-off valve and emergency notification mechanisms.

April 13, 2015: MV Marathassa Oil leak, English Bay, (Vancouver)

On April 15 2015, oil was discovered in the English Bay near Vancouver which was later determined to be spilling from a breach in the hull of grain ship Marathassa. An estimated 2,700 litres of bunker fuel are reported to have leaked into the Bay.

March 1st, 2015: The Murphy Oil Spill, Alberta

About 17 thousand barrels of condensate (a hazardous chemical used to dilute heavy oil) was discovered near the muskeg's surface at Murphy Oil's heavy oil site, 80 kilometers' northeast of Peace River. Alberta. The company said the spill occurred over an extended time-period, but it's still investigating the size and how long it lasted.

November 2014: The Red Creek Oil Spill

Canadian Natural Resources said a mechanical failure led to a spill of 60,000 liters of crude oil near Red Earth Creek, 350 kilometers northwest of Edmonton, Alberta. The company said it was able to contain most of spill on the company's land. As of yet, no harm to wildlife has been reported.

April 2014: The Slave Lake Oil Spill

A pipeline owned by Canadian Natural Resources spilled 70,000 liters of oil and processed water northwest of Slave Lake. Small traces of hydrogen sulphide gas were also detected. Calgarybased CNRL said most of the 68,250 liters that spilled is processed water and all the oil has been recovered. The spill was reported as not being near any people, water or wildlife.

September 25, 2013 – September 29, 2013: North Dakota pipeline spill

On September 25, 2013, a 20-year-old Tesoro Logistics pipeline built in 1993 that carried crude oil from the Bakken shale play to the Stampede rail facility outside Columbus, N.D. ruptured, releasing 20,600-barrel leak in in North Dakota point. The spill was discovered by a nearby farmer while harvesting wheat.

Although it was initially thought that a nearby resident may have punctured the pipe, it was soon discovered that the pipe in fact ruptured from corrosion.

July 2013: Oil spill found on Cold Lake Air Weapons Range

Canadian Natural Resources identified four sites where a bitumen-water mix had been leaking from an old well at the company's oil sands project on the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range. At least 1.5 million litres of bitumen were recovered. At least 100 animals died. The Alberta government issued environmental protection orders and limited the amount of steam CNRL pumps into the reservoir.

May 2013: The Zama pipeline contaminated water Spill

Sometime during the first week of May, 2013, an Apache Canada pipeline in the Zama City region of northern Alberta leaked 15 million toxic litres of process water heavily contaminated with salt. It was 27 days before the spill was discovered. Another 1.8-million-litre leak of waste water was discovered the following October.

March 29, 2013: Exxon Mobil Oil Spill in Arkansas

It's estimated that roughly 5,000 to 7,000 barrels of heavy crude oil spilled from a 22-foot break in ExxonMobil's Pegasus pipeline that forced 22 families to vacate their homes in the nearby a neighborhood in Mayflower, Arkansas.

While nearly 2,000 barrels of oil have been recovered in Arkansas, the actual amount of spilled may never be determined. The pipeline, which runs 850 miles across four states, has been decommissioned ever since.

June 2012: The Plains Midstream Canada pipeline spill

A leak from an underwater pipe on a Plains Midstream pipeline, approximately 90 kilometers northwest of Manning, Alberta, spilled roughly 461,000 liters of oil into a tributary of the Red Deer River. Fishing on the river was shut down and Manning was forced to have it's drinking water trucked in.

The province's regulator concluded the line had not been adequately inspected. The pipeline was shut down for 122 days before it was allowed to reopen. The section of pipe that failed has since been abandoned.

May 19, 2012: The Pace Oil and Gas oil spill

When an aircraft from another oil company made a routine flyover, a leak had gone undetected for almost a week was discovered at the Pace Oil and Gas waste disposal line. During which time, 22 thousand barrels of water-oil emulsion spilled into muskeg wetlands near Rainbow Lake close to the Northwest Territories boundary. In comparison, an estimated 19,500 barrels were escaped during the Kalamazoo River oil spill.

April 29, 2011: Little Buffalo Oil Spill

A crack in a poorly welded and highly stressed section of the Plains Midstream's 57-year old Rainbow pipeline cracked, spilled roughly 28 thousand barrels of oil into a low-lying marshland near the northern Alberta aboriginal community of Little Buffalo. The Rainbow pipeline leak was the second to happen in Alberta in less than two weeks. Only a beaver dam prevented the oil from spreading further.

School in Little Buffalo was canceled for several days due to the stench of oil in the air. Local news reports stated that many of the 125 children attending the local school complained about headaches, dizziness and nausea before school was cancelled.

July 26, 2010: The Kalamazoo oil spill

A 30-inch thick pipeline belonging to Enbridge Inc. ruptured near Marshall, Michigan, contaminating Talmadge Creek and the Kalamazoo River with over a hundred thousand gallons of crude oil. Three days later, the Calhoun County Health Department told 30 to 50 households to evacuate, and twice as many not to drink their water.

Thirty-five miles of the Kalamazoo River were closed for clean-up for two years until June 2012 when part of the river was reopened. One of the reasons for the delayed cleanup was that the EPA had never handled a dilbit (diluted bitumen) spill and that that Enbridge never informed the EPA of the product distinction.

April 20, 2010: The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred on Deepwater Horizon oil platform, located in the Mississippi Canyon about 40 miles (64 km) off the Louisiana coast, that caused it to sink a day-and-a-half later. While initial reports said that little oil had leaked, it was soon reported that roughly 1,000 barrels of oil per day was leaking into the Gulf of Mexico from an exposed oil well on the Ocean's floor.

Later, the U.S. government revealed that five times that, 19,000 barrels per day was pouring into the Gulf, that had resulted in an oil slick that quickly covered hundreds of square miles of ocean surface, threatening marine life, coastal wetlands, and Gulf Coast communities. BP announced that the leak stopped for the first time 88 days after it began. Over a hundred thousand barrels of oil leaked into the Gulf of Mexico before the underwater oil well was capped.

July 23, 2008: The 2008 New Orleans Tanker Spill

On July 23, 2008, a 61-foot barge carrying over 400 thousand gallons of heavy fuel, collided with a 600-foot tanker ship in the Mississippi River near New Orleans. Roughly 400 thousands of gallons of fuel spilled from the barge, halting all river traffic while cleanup efforts attempted to contain the environmental damage. Residents noticed the oil left a "real strong" smell hanging over much of downtown New Orleans.

June 19, 2006: The 2006 Calcasieu River Tanker Spill

A violent storm occurred on June 19 and 20, 2006 that caused an estimated 71,000 barrels of waste oil to spill from two storage tanks at the CITGO Refinery and contaminate the Louisiana's Calcasieu River, Ship Channel, Prien Lake, Moss Lake, Intracoastal Waterway and Calcasieu Lake. A little over a week later, CITGO opened Calcasieu Ship Channel to limited commercial traffic. By then, almost 14 thousand barrels of oil had been recovered from the river and another 24 thousand barrels had been removed from the Indian Marais.

Aug-Sept, 2005: The Hurricane Katrina oil spills

The US Coast Guard estimates that more than 7 million gallons of oil was spilled from up to seven different sources, including: pipelines, storage tanks and industrial plants as a result of Hurricane Katrina. This estimate doesn't include oil spilt from hundreds of gas stations that were damaged and the roughly 250,000 cars that were submerged during the storm.

2004 - Current: The collapse of the Taylor Energy Oil Platform (Discovered in 2015)

In 2015, the Associated Press reported that the Taylor Energy well, located 12 miles off the coast of Louisiana, has been leaking oil into the Gulf of Mexico for over a decade. The break happened in 2004 when Hurricane Ivan struck the Gulf of Mexico causing a mudslide that toppled the offshore well-platform. Since then, oil from the 20 uncapped undersea wells have been leaking into the Gulf freely, causing oil slicks up to 10 miles long.

Gaging the size of the oil slick using satellite images, SkyTruth estimate a daily leakage of between 37 to 900 gallons. Over the years, that adds up to between 300,000 and 1.4 million gallons of oil spilled into Gulf already. Unless plugged, the government estimates the leak could unabated for the next century when the reservoir depletes.

March 24, 1989: The Exxon Valdez oil spill

On March 24, 1989, shortly after midnight, in an attempt to avoid an iceberg, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez struck the Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska, spilling more than 11 to 38 million gallons of crude oil over the course of the next few days. From Bligh Reef the spill stretched 460 miles to the tiny village of Chignik on the Alaska Peninsula. Approximately 1,300 miles of Alaskan shoreline was contaminated.

An estimated 250,000 seabirds, 2,800 sea otters, 300 harbor seals, 250 bald eagles, up to 22 killer whales, and billions of salmon and herring eggs. Clean-up efforts continued for four summers before the effort was called off. Not all beaches were cleaned, and some beaches remain oiled today.

Nov 10, 1988: The sinking of the oil laden Odyssey

On November 10, 1988, an explosion caused the Odyssey, formerly named the Oriental Phoenix, to sink a thousand kilometers off the coast of Nova Scotia, spilling 43 million gallons of oil into the Ocean. In comparison, the Oddysey spilled 4.3 times as much oil as was released from the more famous Exxon Valdez.

1976 -1996: The sinking of the oil Laden Irving Whale

Back in the 70's, the Irving Whale barge was caught a storm and sank to bottom of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, near Prince Edward Island, taking with it the 4,200 tonnes of oil it carried as cargo. Luckily it remained attached to the small tugboat that had been pulling t through the storm, so responders they knew its location.

Still, it took twenty years before the barge was raised from the Ocean floor, all the while roughly 1,100 tonnes of oil and 5,700 kilograms of oil laced with hazardous industrial chemicals known as PCBs spilled into the Ocean.