

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

July 21st, 2016: The Husky Oil spill, Saskatchewan

Last week, on July 21st, 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 when an oil slick was detected downstream of the city in the North Saskatchewan River. Officials don't know yet what caused the disaster.

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

Last month, 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.

The volume of tar sands oil and dilbit released was 4,000 barrels greater than the 27,000 barrels of tar sands oil spilled by Enbridge in the Kalamazoo Michigan in 2010, currently in the worst land spill in U.S. history.

May 12, 2016: The Brutus oil rig spill

Two months ago, on May 12, 2016, an undersea break on Shell's Brutus oil rig spilled 2,100 barrels of oil, roughly 88,200 gallons, into the Gulf of Mexico. The leak resulted in a 13-mile-long oil slick roughly 100 miles south of Port Fourchon, Louisiana. The cause of the leak remains under investigation.

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. Calgary-based 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.

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.

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 its 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 Odyssey 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 it 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.