
Enbridge Oil Spill

Hotline Number for Enbridge Oil Spill Questions: (800) 306-6837

What is in the Oil?

The Enbridge oil spill contains heavy crude oil. Crude oil is a mixture of different hydrogen- and carbon-based chemicals normally called hydrocarbons. Because they are mixtures, different oils can be harmful in different ways. The crude oil involved in this oil spill is what is called heavy crude oil.

What is in the Air?

Over time, many of the compounds that make up these oil mixtures will enter the air. The wind will then spread out these vapors over a distance, lowering their concentration in any one area. Based on what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports about these chemicals and their previous experiences with oil spills, the level of vapors in the air is expected to be below the level that can hurt you. Tests of the air can tell us more. These tests are being conducted at this time and will continue for as long as necessary.

Strong smells affect different people in different ways. Some people may experience nausea, vomiting, or headaches. Leaving the area affected by the smell should help to stop your symptoms, if the smell is causing them. If you have to be outside, a respirator with an odor control feature may provide some relief from the smell. Based on what is known now, you do not need to use a respirator for your safety, but using one may make you more comfortable. Most hardware stores stock NIOSH-certified N95 respirators with odor control or charcoal filter layers; check the label to make sure the mask is an N95 respirator with odor control or an N95 with a charcoal layer. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully to be sure you are using the mask properly.

For now, if the smell bothers you, stay indoors, close the doors and windows, and turn on your central air conditioning. If you have a window air conditioner, instead of a central unit, it may be better not to use the air conditioner or to turn the settings to the recirculating mode, which closes the outside ventilation feature.

At this time, evacuation is not considered necessary. However, the situation is being closely monitored and if evacuation of any area is required, you will be contacted by health authorities.

Can the oil harm my children?

Children tend to be more sensitive than adults to oil and other forms of pollution. What might be annoying to you could be a real problem for them, particularly if your child is an infant or toddler, or has a pre-existing condition.

Like adults, children should avoid contact with the oil. If some of the oil gets on your children's bare skin, wash it off as soon as you can. Watch your children carefully for rashes or dark, sticky spots on their skin that are hard to wash off. If you see any of these symptoms, see your doctor or other health care provider.

What to Expect?

People can be exposed to hazardous substances related to the spill by breathing them (air), by swallowing them (food or water), or by touching them (skin). People should avoid close contact to the spill and fumes from any burning oil.

Air Quality:

- **Smell:** People may be able to smell the oil spill. Exposure to low levels of these chemicals may cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and skin. People with asthma or other lung diseases may be more sensitive to these effects. These people should attempt to limit exposure to these vapors.

If you smell gas or see smoke or know that fires are nearby, stay indoors, set your air conditioner to reuse indoor air, and avoid physical activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart.

Food:

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are monitoring the oil spill and its potential impact on the safety of fish harvested from the area. CDC will continue to work closely with the FDA to monitor food safety and will notify the public of any potential hazards.

Water:

- Based on current findings, drinking water and household water from water wells is not expected to be affected by the spill. Water tests are being conducted at this time and will continue for as long as necessary. Municipal water is not affected by the oil. However, water used for recreation may be affected. Swimming in water contaminated with chemicals from the oil spill could cause health effects.
- The Kalamazoo River water is not to be used for drinking by any animal or for irrigation.

Updated: 7/28/2010 7:56 AM

What should I do if I see animals that have been exposed to the oil?

Individuals should not attempt to approach, rescue, or contain any animals exposed to the oil. Attempts to capture animals may cause injury to both the animal and the rescuer. A trained rescuer will respond to your call. Please be patient.



Calhoun County Public Health Department

190 E. Michigan Avenue, Suite A100
Battle Creek, Michigan 49014
Tel: (269) 969-6371
Fax: (269) 969-6488