

Be Red Cross Ready

Oil Spill Checklist

An oil spill is a release of a liquid petroleum hydrocarbon into the environment due to human activity.

Terms to Know:

- **Surface Washing Agents**—Products that soften and lift oil off of surfaces. They do this either by dispersing the oil into small droplets or by lifting the oil from the surface so it floats on the water and can be recovered.
- **Tar Balls**—Sticky, persistent remains of oil spills created through a process of weathering. Handling tar balls is not recommended.
- **Mousse**—Brown, rust or orange-colored oil or oil-water mixture that has lost some of its more volatile parts through evaporation. It may cause human health hazards through inhalation, skin contact or ingestion.
- **Dispersants**—Chemicals that break down oil slicks into small droplets and disperse them through the water.

What to do to prepare



Stay informed

- ❑ Being aware of possible hazards is the first step to staying safe. It's always a good idea to do a little research before you set off for the beach or go boating or fishing. If you're planning to go to a beach or water area possibly affected by the oil spill, consult local and state public health departments to see if the area is experiencing contamination. Stay out of closed or contaminated areas.
- ❑ Young children, pregnant women, the elderly, people with compromised immune systems and individuals with underlying respiratory conditions are more likely to suffer medical problems due to exposure to oil products. It's best that they stay out of any possibly contaminated areas.

If you are in the oil-affected area

- ❑ Hazards from an oil spill come from the potential to be exposed to substances through breathing (air), eating or drinking (food or drink) and touching (through the skin). Therefore:
 - Avoid direct skin contact with oil, oil spill-affected water and sediments.
 - Do not fish in the oil spill-affected waters.
 - Do not harvest and eat dead seafood, seafood with oily residue or seafood that has a petroleum odor.
 - Do not swim or ski in areas affected by the oil spill.
 - Do not drive your boat through oil slicks or oil sheens.
 - Do not burn debris, driftwood or other materials contaminated with oil.
- ❑ The smell is generally not a health risk. However, if you are bothered by it, stay indoors, run your air conditioner in recirculation mode and avoid physical activities that put extra demands on your lungs and heart.

What to do during the oil spill



In case you come in contact with an oil product

- ❑ Immediately remove yourself from the environment.
- ❑ Wash yourself thoroughly with fresh water and soap, baby oil, petroleum jelly or a cleaning paste for hands, such as those sold at auto parts stores. Do not use solvents, gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel or similar products to clean oil off skin.
- ❑ Remove contaminated clothing and launder with detergent and fresh water. Do not launder it with other clothing and throw away anything you can't get clean.
- ❑ If you get oil in your eyes, flush them with water for 15 minutes.
- ❑ If a person or pet has swallowed oil, do not induce or encourage vomiting. Seek medical attention.
- ❑ If you inhale oil vapors, or smoke from burning oil, move to an area where the air is more clear.
- ❑ Seek immediate medical attention if you experience acute shortness of breath, significant coughing, facial or throat swelling, nausea or vomiting or a significant rash after being exposed to oil products. Be sure to inform medical personnel of any possible exposure.
- ❑ If you encounter a wild animal that has been exposed to oil, contact local authorities. Do not attempt to capture or clean it unless you have been properly trained.
- ❑ If your pet is exposed to oil:
 - Because of the harm from the internal and external effects of the oil, all efforts should be made to wash the oiled pet within 24-48 hours.
 - Remove oil from feathers/fur using a mild dishwashing detergent and warm water.
 - Wear non-latex, oil-resistant gloves and rub the detergent solution through feathers/fur.
 - Feathers/fur must be washed and rinsed repeatedly until the oil is removed.
 - Contact your veterinarian to determine if further steps should be taken.

Recovery



Returning home after an oil spill crisis

- ❑ A home should not be re-occupied until potential health hazards, such as indoor mold, oil contamination and structural damage, have been looked at and fixed.
- ❑ If oil has contaminated the home, it may require professional decontamination. Refer to local authorities for guidance on oil decontamination of residences.
- ❑ Avoid bare skin contact with sediment, soil and indoor surfaces with visible oil contamination.
- ❑ Restrict children and pets from entering areas containing oil-related waste.
- ❑ Keep arms and legs covered. Wear coveralls or clothing that can be left at the oil-contaminated residences.
- ❑ Use oil-resistant gloves; do not use latex gloves.
- ❑ Open doors and windows to ventilate the oil-contaminated residence.
- ❑ Do not transport oil-contaminated items to non-contaminated locations.

Manage stress

- ❑ Stay informed about the extent of the oil spread and how it is affecting the area. Knowing the facts can lessen anxiety that comes from uncertainty. However, watching too much news about the spill can increase stress.
- ❑ Avoid having children watch or see repeated images of troubling events. Young children might think that the event is happening over and over.
- ❑ Make connections with family, friends and neighbors. Helping one another can be positive for your emotional health.
- ❑ Maintain a hopeful outlook on the situation. Disasters are inevitable, but not insurmountable. Know that many scientists and experts are working to limit the oil's spread and damage.
- ❑ Engage in healthy behaviors, such as eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water, to enhance your ability to cope with stress.
- ❑ Set priorities and tackle tasks in small steps.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community has experienced a disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site, available through RedCross.org/SafeandWell, to let your family and friends know about your welfare. You may also call **1-866-GET-INFO (1-866-438-4636)** to register yourself and your family.