



## Region 7

Iowa  
Kansas  
Missouri  
Nebraska

## Fact Sheet

March 2008

### Use of Chemical Countermeasures on Oil Spills Information for Local Government Responders

#### WHAT ARE CHEMICAL COUNTERMEASURES?

The short answer: any element, compound, or mixture that reduces harmful effects or otherwise helps remove oil (and oil-based products) from the environment. Examples include surface washing agents, solidifying agents, and bioremediation agents.



*Diesel Release  
Independence Creek tributary, Missouri River*

#### WHEN CAN CHEMICAL COUNTERMEASURES BE USED?

During a spill, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) On-Scene Coordinator (OSC), in coordination with the Regional Response Team (RRT), may orally authorize the use of a

chemical countermeasure provided it is listed on the National Contingency Plan (NCP) Product Schedule (see weblink below). In general, EPA strongly discourages the use of chemical countermeasures on inland waterways; the preferred removal methods are mechanical or physical (e.g., boom, vacuum truck recovery, etc.). However, if chemical countermeasures are being considered, federal regulations require that EPA grant authorization prior to the application of any such countermeasure.

#### WHAT ABOUT SMALL ROADSIDE SPILLS?

EPA recognizes the urgent nature of small roadside oil/fuel spills, and "pre-authorizes" (i.e., no pre-approval necessary) the use of chemical countermeasures (those listed on the NCP Product Schedule) to reduce the slickness of the highway or roadway, and to preserve and maintain the integrity of the pavement surface that may be degraded by the solvent action of the spilled fuel. EPA's preauthorization of chemical countermeasures applies *ONLY* for mitigating these types of small spills.

In responding to small roadside oil/fuel spills local responders must first remove

as much of the spilled fuel as is practicable by conventional mechanical or physical means (i.e., granular absorbents or absorbent pads). When the amount of fuel has been reduced to a visible sheen or to the extent practicable, chemical countermeasures may be applied per the manufacturer's instructions. Containment of run-off, however, will need to be addressed.



**Drum skimming operations  
500 gallon waste oil spill, Council Bluffs, Iowa**

### **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER CONSIDERATIONS OR RESTRICTIONS?**

Again, chemical countermeasures *must not* be applied to spills on inland surface waters or to spills that may reach a waterway - through storm drains or nearby creeks - without the prior permission of EPA.

Also, chemical countermeasures *must not* be applied in areas where there is a concern that such measures may result in groundwater contamination (i.e., shallow aquifer, karst geology). Local response authorities should always consult with EPA or their state environmental agency when groundwater contamination may be of concern. Caution must be used when

applying chemical countermeasures into a closed conduit, such as a sanitary or storm sewer. Many countermeasures, especially surface washing agents, break down the fuel and increase vaporization. When vaporization is a concern, responders should use products specifically designed to suppress vaporization.

Many states have their own policies regarding the use of chemical countermeasures. Local response authorities should also consult with their state's environmental agency before using chemical countermeasures. Authorization to use chemical countermeasures for fuel slick reduction is provided only for local government responders. In such instances, chemical countermeasures may be used only if a local government representative is on-scene to provide oversight.

### **ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

1. *NCP, 40 CFR Part 300 Subpart J.*
2. *Access the NCP Product Schedule at:*  
<http://www.epa.gov/emergencies/docs/oil/ncp/schedule.pdf>

### **EPA AND STATE SPILL LINES**

National Response Center: 800-424-8802

EPA Region 7 Hotline: 913-281-0991

#### State Spill Hotlines:

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| Iowa (IDNR):     | 515-281-8694 |
| Kansas (KDHE):   | 785-296-1679 |
| Missouri (MDNR): | 573-634-2436 |
| Nebraska (NDEQ): | 402-471-2186 |