

September 8, 2008

DEQ, partners continue assessment missions

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality continues to work with local, state and federal agencies to help in the recovery during the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav. DEQ has established an Incident Command Center at its downtown Baton Rouge office where daily assignments are handed out to DEQ staff and its partners. The missions are updated in the afternoon.

The agency and its partners have found no threats from industry-related malfunction that would cause harm to human health or the environment during these extensive assessments. There have been several fish kills and small spills reported, but nothing that the agencies involved would consider “major” or a threat.

To teams’ assessments to date:

DEQ, the Department of Health and Hospitals and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have assessed 73 of the 100 major (more than 1-million gallons) sewage treatment plants in the state that were impacted by Gustav.

DEQ, DHH and the Louisiana Rural Water Association continue to assess and offer technical advice to the 4,305 minor treatment plants (under 1-million gallons) in the impacted are. Of these, 108 have been assessed.

There are 268 licensed septic haulers that can operate in Louisiana.

95 industrial facilities have been assessed. Of these, 81 are operational.

125 debris management sites have been established through parish officials and DEQ. Of these, 35 are Department of Transportation sites. 90 are sites by parish.

The Army Corps of Engineers has estimated that between 12 and 15 million cubic yards of debris were left behind by Gustav.

31 incidents of oil spills have been documented by DEQ aerial recon efforts. The information will be reported to the National Response Center within 10 days of the spill under the Oil Pollution Act.

DEQ and its partners have assessed more than 580 underground storage tanks. St. Martin, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. Mary and Terrebonne have been completed. There have been no major underground storage tanks spills.

DEQ has conducted assessments of 115 radiation sites. More than 260 remain.

Eight superfund sites have been assessed. There have been no problems discovered at any of these sites.

“The department will continue to work with state, federal and local officials to ensure the safety of the citizens and the environmental well being of the state following Gustav,” DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett said. “We are all encouraged by what the assessment teams are reporting. It seems that early preparedness by a variety of industry officials and the public in general have helped mitigate environmental damage. This is not an all-clear, and I encourage citizens and industry officials to be on the lookout for spills. DEQ staff will continue to work tirelessly until the emergency is behind us. We'd also like to remind everyone that they can be the solution by taking steps like recycling, reporting environmental problems and watching the course of Hurricane Ike.”

If someone should have an environmental concern, they should call the DEQ hotline at 225-219-3640 or 1-888-763-5424 for assistance