Site: Martin Co.
Break: 2.10
Other:

85469

POLREP NUMBER 2
KENTUCKY/WEST VIRGINIA COAL SLURRY SPILL
MARTIN COUNTY COAL CORPORATION
INEZ, KY

EVENT: MULTI-REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE
ATTN: DOUG LAIR, EPA REGION IV
CHARLIE KLEEMAN, EPA REGION III

I. SITUATION (1700 HOURS, TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2000)

A. At approximately 0200 hours on Wednesday, 11 October 2000, an estimated 250 million gallons of coal mine fine refuse slurry were released from a 72-acre impoundment operated by Martin County Coal Corporation (MCCC). The release occurred as a result of a sudden and unexpected breach into an underground mine adjacent to MCCC's refuse impoundment. The slurry entered both the Wolf Creek and Rockcastle Creek watersheds of Martin County, Kentucky. The spilled material has impacted more than 75 miles of surface water downstream of the site, including both the Tug Fork and Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River, a tributary of the Ohio River. The Tug Fork and Big Sandy Rivers border both West Virginia and Kentucky.

B. Several potable water and industrial intakes have been affected as a result of the spill. The following provides status and current activities being conducted regarding the affected systems:

West Virginia:

The Fort Gay, WV water treatment plant (WTP) has storage capacity of 210,000 gallons. The town has implemented conservation efforts, such as closing car washes and laundromats. The town is currently trucking water from Prichard, WV via the Kenova WTP. Normal usage by the town will deplete its reserve in 20 hrs; however, reduced usage will allow 40 hrs of supply. A proposal from the town of Fort Gay to the mine owners has been submitted to construct an impoundment on Mill Creek. This will allow the town to pump water from the creek to the water plant. A sample of the creek water was taken by Wayne County OES to determine if the water is potable.

The town of Kermit, WV is constructing a pipeline from the WTP along the railroad to a distance 6,000 feet up the Tug Fork River, just above the confluence of Wolf Creek and the Tug Fork River. The estimated completion date of the line is Wednesday, 18 October 2000. This line is expected to supply water to both the towns of Kermit and Crum, WV. Garfield, KY is being supplied with water by Kermit, WV.

Kenova, WV WTP was shut down at 1230 hrs by the West Virginia Health Department (WVHD). Kenova has a 1.5 day storage capacity at their facility. The Health Department will not allow Kenova's WTP to reopen its intake until data is obtained from samples collected from the Tug Fork River. EPA received unvalidated data on 17 October 2000. WVHD will review these results once they are validated to determine if a health threat is present. According to Kenova WTP's superintendent, Lavalette, WV, WV American Water in Huntington, WV, and Ashland, KY are expected to supply water to Kenova following shutdown of the intake line.

Kentucky:

Inez, KY has a remaining reserve of 12 days of potable water. Schools are closed in an effort to conserve water. A pipeline extension is being constructed to provide an alternate water supply to the town from the Middle Fork. This system is expected to be operating by 22 October 2000.

Louisa, KY continues to experience a water emergency. Schools are closed. Tanker trucks ot water are supplying water directly to hospital. A pipeline is being constructed to a point 1 mile upstream of their intake to draw fresh water. This system is expected to be operating by 18 October 2000.

The Ashland/Marathon Oil Refinery in Catlettsburg, KY has shut down their water intakes. It is reported that the refinery is getting water from the Ohio River delivered by barge.

C. MCCC is continuing to respond to the spill with their employees and contractor personnel. Federal and State agencies are supporting local emergency services, and are providing guidance and direction regarding response priorities, which still include ensuring adequate supplies of potable water to affected areas, and containment of source material in Coldwater Fork of Rockcastle Creek and Wolf Creek. Agencies represented on-scene include:

Federal:	EPA Region III (OSC Bob Kelly), EPA Region IV (OSC Art Smith), EPA ERT (Greg Powell), USCG Strike Team, U.S. DOL-MSHA, U.S. DOI-OSM, U.S. Army COE
State:	KYDNREPC, KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Dept. for Surface Mining and Reclamation (KY DSMRE), KY Emergency Management, WV DEP, WV Health Dept.
Local:	Martin County EMA

D. As of early the morning of 17 October 2000 the blackwater front had reached a point on the Big Sandy River about 4 miles upstream of the confluence with the Ohio River. The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO)

has been monitoring the Big Sandy River for turbidity, conductivity, and pH, in order to track the advancement of the front. The USCG has plans to launch a boat at the confluence of the Ohio River and the Big Sandy River to monitor the leading edge of the front.

E. Weather: To date, weather conditions continue to be favorable for conducting response operations. A trace of rain fell for the first time since the release occurred, on 17 October 2000. There continues to be concerns over possible flooding and migration of the slurry should a significant rain event occur, due to the accumulation of solids in creek and river channels as a result of the impoundment failure.

II. ACTIONS TAKEN:

A. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife are attempting to launch a boat onto the Tug Fork River to determine a death count for aquatic life. Replacement actions will be taken following the passage of the black water and slurry.

EPA Region III contacted the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to investigate the health effects of the chemical constituents of the flocculent that may be a component of the released slurry.

Water and sediment sampling has been conducted by various entities, including contractors of MCCC, KYDNREPC, and EPA Region 3. The analytical results for these samples were not yet available as of 1700, 17 October 2000.

B. MCCC and its contractors have installed a check dam across Coldwater Fork and filter dams along both Coldwater Fork and Wolf Creek. Mud Cat barges, vacuum trucks, and water trucks continue to be used to remove water and solids from Coldwater Fork, and dipping operations are continuing to be conducted on Wolf Creek to remove materials there. Settling basins are being constructed adjacent to Coldwater Fork and are being planned for Wolf Creek to be used to store recovered slurry. Cells are also continuing to be constructed nearby to receive slurry via pipeline or truck from Coldwater Fork. A plan has been proposed to pump slurry recovered from Wolf Creek into the Wolf Creek number 4 mine impoundment. In addition, old refuse ponds have been prepared and HOPE pipe has been constructed to receive recovered slurry from Wolf Creek. Filter booms have also been installed across the Tug Fork and across the Levisa Fork to promote the settling of suspended solids.

C. A community meeting was held 17 October 2000 in Inez, KY. The meeting was attended by over 250 local residents. The Secretary of KYDNREPC, and the Adjutant General of the KY National Guard were in attendance. The EPA Region 4 OSC responded to citizens' requests for EPA to conduct water quality sampling.

Region 4 EPA will collect samples from the two creeks affected by the spill and provide results to the community in an expedited manner.

D. A primary focus continues to be on ability of municipal water companies to provide potable water, as well as on efforts to contain and begin recovery of the released materials in Coldwater Fork and Wolf Creek.

E. A proposal has been submitted by MCCC's contractor that presents preliminary mitigation and recovery plans. The proposal is being reviewed by appropriate regulatory parties. This effort is expected to be an evolving one, as approaches are tried and data is collected on their effectiveness.

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