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Cleanup Operations Expanding after Crude Oil Released into Yellowstone River

BILLINGS, Mont.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- ExxonMobil Pipeline Company continues to expand its clean up operation following a release of crude oil into the Yellowstone River in Montana.

"We are bringing in experts from across the country to clean up the oil," ExxonMobil Pipeline Company president Gary Pruessing said today in Billings, where he is leading the response effort. "We will stay with the cleanup until it is complete, and we sincerely apologize to the people of Montana for any inconvenience the incident is creating."

No cause has been identified for the release of oil from the pipeline, which met all regulatory requirements and has undergone inspection most recently in December. A field audit of the pipeline's integrity management program was undertaken by U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration in June.

Pipeline pumps were shut down within seven minutes of a pressure loss and action to isolate the pipeline was immediately initiated. The amount of oil released is estimated to be between 750 and 1,000 barrels.

Air quality monitoring throughout the impacted area is ongoing and has confirmed no danger to public health. Municipal water systems are being notified to monitor water quality but no reports of impacts have been received to date.

Oil has been found as far as five miles down the river from the pipeline location and additional reports of oil sightings are being investigated.

Crews responded from ExxonMobil's Billings refinery Saturday, and used boom and absorbent pads to pick up oil and staged response equipment throughout the area. An additional 50 people trained in oil spill response were expected to join the effort today. They will be joined by members of ExxonMobil's North American Regional Response team from across the United States who have expertise in oil spill emergency response operations.

"We recognize the seriousness of this incident and are working hard to address it," said Pruessing. "We will continue to add resources and are extremely grateful for the patience and assistance of local residents and authorities."

ExxonMobil is working to coordinate the cleanup with local authorities, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, county commissioners, local response organizations and International Bird Rescue.

"We are presenting a detailed plan this morning which outlines how we clean up oil already located and continue to search for additional oil," said Pruessing.

A claims hotline number 1-888-382-0043 has been established to assist individuals who might have been impacted by this event. About 40 calls were responded to on Saturday and Pruessing urged members of the public to report oil to assist in the cleanup effort.

A number of residents in nearby Laurel were temporarily evacuated from their homes early Saturday as a precaution but were able to return later that morning.

Source: Exxon Mobil Corporation