

Site: Martin Co.  
Break: 2.10  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

85482

**POLREP NUMBER 7  
KENTUCKY/WEST VIRGINIA COAL SLURRY SPILL  
MARTIN COUNTY COAL CORPORATION  
INEZ, KENTUCKY**

EVENT: MULTI-REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
DATE: OCTOBER 31, 2000  
ATTN: DOUG LAIR, EPA REGION IV  
CHARLIE KLEEMAN, EPA REGION III

**I. BACKGROUND**

- 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.
- C. A Joint Information Center (JIC) has been established on site. The JIC serves to issue joint press releases from EPA, the state of Kentucky and MCCC. The OSC requests that all media inquiries be directed to the JIC at (606) 395-0353.

**II. CURRENT ACTIVITIES (1700 HOURS, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2000)**

**Weather:** weather conditions continue to be favorable for conducting response operations. There continues to be concerns over possible flooding and migration of the slurry should a significant rain event occur. A Precipitation Action Plan has been developed for a major storm event and has been approved by the Unified Command.

- A. West Virginia:
  - 1. The town of Fort Gay, WV is receiving water from Louisa WTP. The town of Fort Gay, has opened car washes and laundromats.
  - 2. On 30 October 2000, a meeting was held at the Incident Command Center located at Martin County Coal Corporation to discuss the fate of the coal slurry deposited behind the Fort Gay Lock & Dam. Representatives from EPA Regions IV and III, START Regions IV and III, EPA ERT, KDFWR, KYNREPC, KYDOW, KYEM, Polaris, MCCC, WV Bureau of Public Health, WVOEHS, Corbett & Holt, WVDEP, and Vertex attended the meeting. During the meeting it was

planned to use a sludge judge to identify the physical characteristics of the sediments. These characteristics will be photo documented. A small boat staffed with Engineers from USCG and Potesta will be used to access the area above the Lock and Dam. During operations the Police department from the town of Fort Gay will be requested to assist in securing the dam.

3. A follow-up meeting was held at the Kentucky ICP to discuss the sampling. Members from Potesta Associates were present. Items addressed were the depth and length of the deposition. The issue concerning sample locations was addressed. Potesta Associates stated that they will not know the number, location, or distance between the samples until the survey is conducted today. Safety issues were stressed during the meeting. MCCC representatives stressed that this sampling will not be the only sampling conducted; if the command system requests additional work, they will oblige. However, sampling will only be conducted behind the dam during the initial sampling event due to time restrictions.
4. A joint effort is being undertaken by WVDNR and the KDFWR to conduct bioassay testing on fish while conducting time-critical biological monitoring along the waters of the Tug Fork River. Data collected from the event will be studied to investigate the current condition of aquatic life in the waterways and to determine the effects of the spill on aquatic life. An important condition that is being evaluated is the presence and thickness of the slurry coating on the fish gills.
5. Kenova, WV is supplying water to all of its customers. The Kenova is treating water from its normal intake with liquid Alum and polymers. The Kenova WTP continues to supply water to the Big Sandy Water District, Don Acres, Kenova, Ceredo, Ridgelawn, Buffalo, Centerville, and Prichard. Turbidity levels in the influent remains approximately three times the normal level, but the water is treatable.
6. Kermit, WV continues to supply 100% of its customers with water through the temporary line, which draws water from a location along the Tug Fork. Kermit continues to supply water to Crum, WV. Kermit WTP will also supply to Warfield, KY as soon as possible.

**B. Kentucky:**

1. The water treatment plant in Louisa, KY is operational and supplying 100% of their customers, Big Sandy, and Ft. Gay. Louisa has more than 1 million gallons of water in storage. All advisories have been lifted. Louisa is supplying 1.3 million gallons per day.
2. Inez, KY continues to pump from the Middle Fork Creek. Production is back to the normal 1.4 mgd and they are slowly replenishing their reservoir.

- C. MCCC continues to respond to the spill with their company and subcontractor resources. Federal and State agencies continue to support and provide guidance to the companies response team (ICS). Federal, state and local agencies represented on-scene include:

Federal: EPA Region IV (OSC Fred Stroud), EPA Region III (OSC Jack Downie & Robert Kelly), EPA ERT (Alan Humphries, Greg Powell), USCG Strike Team,  
U.S. DOL-MSHA, U.S. DOI-OSM, U.S. Army COE

State: KYDNREPC (Ralph Collins), KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Dept. for Surface Mining and Reclamation (KY DSMRE), KY Emergency Management

Local: Martin County EMA

- D. Approximately 9.4 million gallons of slurry has been pumped into the impoundments in the last 4 days. Ongoing operations in Coldwater and Wolf Creek watersheds are as follows:

**Coldwater:** Cleanup includes slurry removal from the original creek channel using 3 dredges, construction of 2 pipe lines to pump slurry from the dredges to the impoundments is complete and operating. Treatment includes flocculation and sedimentation. Construction of three up stream and one large down stream sedimentation ponds in the Coldwater to control flow in the event of heavy rains is under construction this week. Additional cells are being constructed at the corn field and Cain property locations. Addition of lime oxide to solidify the slurry was initiated on 30 October. This solidification process will enable cleanup crews to remove sludge with track hoes and dump trucks.

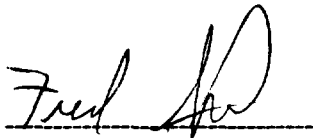
Teams have begun to survey the creek in an attempt to generate remediation options. They will note accessibility to the creek banks and sediment thickness along the banks.

**Wolf Creek:** Operations in Wolf Creek include construction of two additional Gabion weirs to control flow into the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy, and constructing numerous rock siltation dams. Advanced efforts of mechanical removal of sludge from the creek banks has been initiated, where accessible. Three 18 in. lines have been constructed. Two lines are pumping slurry from Wolf Creek to the Wolf Creek Collieries cells and the third line is pumping clean water back to the creek.

- E. Kemron Environmental Services, Inc., a subcontractor of Region 4 START, continues to perform treatability tests to identify pretreatment alternatives to remove the fines from the water prior to entering the affected municipal drinking water plants.
- F. An ERT film crew is on site for video documentation of the spill and impacted areas.

**III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

- A. Continue remediation efforts including construction of weirs in the Coldwater and Wolf Creeks, continue to pump slurry from the creeks and excavate sludge from the creek banks where assessable.
- B. Continue water treatability studies and perform a field test later this week.



FRED STROUD, OSC  
REGION IV, EPA



ROBERT KELLY, OSC  
EPA REGION III