

**Remarks from RADM Scorby from Media Availability at NAS Oceana**

Friday, June 23, 2017

NAS Oceana Fuel Spill Investigation

Good morning. I'm Rear Admiral Jack Scorby, Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. Thank you all for being here.

Today I'd like to update you on the status of the cleanup, the results of the investigation, disciplinary actions taken, and the corrective actions we've put in place following the May 11 spill that allowed 94,000 gallons of JP-5 jet fuel to spill here at Naval Air Station Oceana, of which 25-thousand gallons of that fuel spilled off base and into Wolfsnare Creek.

The rapid response by the Navy and our federal state and local partners quickly prevented the spill from entering the Lynnhaven River and causing potentially more damage to wildlife and the environment.

All off-installation visible and recoverable fuel was captured by May 26<sup>th</sup> and excavation of soil in the vicinity of the fuel farm on the installation was completed on June 9<sup>th</sup>. As an added measure of precaution, absorbent booms continue to be placed into Wolfsnare Creek to capture any residual jet fuel that may be discovered. We will continue to monitor the area until we are satisfied that all of the fuel has been recovered.

While the visible portion of the cleanup effort is nearly complete both on and off the installation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), in conjunction with the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Environmental Division, will oversee the installation of monitoring wells, the scheduled inspection of the wells, and the scheduled sampling of soil throughout the spill area. The Navy and VDEQ are currently working together to determine the number and placement of the wells and soil sampling. This will continue for approximately six to eight months, or as long as required.

This was a terrible situation and inconvenience for the nearby neighborhoods. Through this all, we have kept the families affected by the spill our top priority.

Of the 200 households affected, 48 families voluntarily relocated. With the exception of one family, all households are back in their homes.

The voluntarily relocated families have received checks to pay for lodging, meals and incidental expenses they incurred during the temporary relocation. Other families are receiving assistance in filing claims for any losses potentially caused by the fuel spill.

Thus far, the overall estimated cost for the clean-up and taking care of our neighbors is \$3.8 million dollars. This includes costs for the Navy and all agencies working on the clean-up, as well the value of the fuel lost.

Now I will give you more background on the investigation's findings on the factors that led to the fuel spill, the disciplinary actions we've taken, and the corrective measures that have been put in place to prevent this from ever happening again.

The investigation, conducted by Naval Supply Systems Command, Fleet Logistics Center Norfolk, the command that is in charge of the fueling operations at Naval Air Station Oceana, began the day the spill was discovered and concluded last week.

As I told you last month, a fuel lever was in an incorrect position during a refueling operation causing 94,000 gallons to be mis-routed from one of three 880,000 gallon tanks to a 2,000 gallon tank.

The investigation found multiple instances of human error, dereliction of duty and local oversight failure as causing the chain of events that led to the spill.

The investigation also uncovered that the manual fuel lever was opened sometime around 2 p.m. on May 10<sup>th</sup> and remained open until approximately 6:25 a.m. the following day. It was discovered by two on-coming personnel conducting their initial rounds.

The investigation further discovered a number of instances in which the Sailors on watch during this timeframe failed to perform their appointed duties.

After reviewing the completed investigation, Captain James Lowther, Commanding Officer of Naval Supply Systems Command, Fleet Logistics Center Norfolk, initiated disciplinary and administrative actions for nine military personnel responsible, both officer and enlisted.

Disciplinary actions range from the imposition of non-judicial punishment to referral to trial by court-martial. Administrative options also include removal or reassignment.

Because of the ongoing legal process and individual privacy rights, I cannot provide names or specific disciplinary actions.

I can tell you that a total of nine military personnel have or will face some form of disciplinary action, and that these personnel range in grade from junior enlisted Sailors to senior officers. As of this morning, disciplinary actions have been completed for seven military personnel.

Potential administrative actions are also being considered for one civilian.

As for the corrective actions ... in the immediate aftermath of the spill, I previously told you the number of watch stander personnel was doubled, from 20 to 40 personnel. Additionally, a safety stand-down was held to review processes and procedures.

But our work did not end there.

We also convened a working group to identify the best practices and procedures that can be put in place not only at Naval Air Station Oceana, but everywhere the Navy operates and we changed our fuel management processes so accidents such as this do not happen again.

Our working group looked at personnel, training and qualifications, processes and procedures and materiel.

For instance:

Personnel are conducting increased rounds during fueling operations with two personnel, one Sailor/one civilian.

Engineers have added a spring loaded drain valve, in addition to the current manually set valve. What this means is I would have to hold the fuel lever down and if I release the lever, it will automatically close fuel flow.

An overfill prevention valve is also being installed in the 2,000 gallon recovery tank that would cut off the fuel flow once the amount of fuel reaches 95%.

And, we are reviewing the way sailors are selected, trained, and qualified for duty in the Bulk Fuels Facility in order to improve safety.

Lastly, to the extent possible, fuel deliveries will now be made between the hours of 7:30 am and 9:30 p.m. to avoid increased risk with overnight fueling operations through the pipeline.

A copy of the redacted investigation will be available as soon as the redaction process is complete.

We have been working hard to make a terrible situation better. We cleaned up as fast as we could, given the extent of this spill thanks to the rapid and professional response from our Navy, Coast Guard, and local agency partners.

We've focused on the well-being of the families affected by the spill to get them back into their homes and very much appreciate their patience and cooperation.

We're working with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to make sure no traces of the spill remain and that there is no further impact on the environment and neighborhoods.

We are holding people accountable for their actions, or inactions, that lead to the spill, and have taken measures to keep this from happening again.

The Navy is committed to the continued monitoring and assessment until we are confident we've done everything we can to clean this up.

Getting this right is important to us, because we live and work in the community as well.

Naval Air Station Oceana and the surrounding community have been good neighbors for a long time. I want you to know that I am – that we are all – committed to maintaining or regaining your trust.

Navy installations have a responsibility to support the fleet – our aircraft, our ships, our expeditionary forces – the war fighters and their families.

The Navy has an equally important responsibility to be a good neighbor in the communities we operate.

We have a responsibility to be good stewards of the environment.

And we have a responsibility to be good stewards of the resources the American public entrusts to us to defend the nation.

We take these responsibilities seriously and we hold people accountable for those that don't.

Again, I would like to thank the responders who helped us with the cleanup efforts, and most importantly, I would like to thank the community for your patience, your understanding, and your support.

Thank you again for your time. I will be happy to answer your questions.