ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH OCTOBER 2, 2019 B-17 PLANE CRASH AT BRADLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Update as of 11:30 a.m. Monday, Oct. 7, 2019

At approximately 10 a.m. on October 2, 2019, a World War II era B-17 plane crashed at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks shortly after take-off, impacting a de-icing facility and erupting in flames. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP's) Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and Site Assessment and Support Unit (SASU) responded to the scene to address environmental concerns associated with this tragic incident. Those concerns included releases of (1) aviation gasoline from the plane, (2) propylene glycol associated with the de-icing facility, and (3) aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) containing per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) used to fight the fire.

An estimated 700 to 800 gallons of AFFF concentrate, diluted at 3% to make approximately 22,000 to 25,000 gallons of AFFF solution, was applied by the Bradley Airport Fire Department to fight the petroleum hydrocarbon fire. Bradley is required by the Federal Aviation Administration to have available and use AFFF for responding to incidents such as this. Fire suppression water containing AFFF and fuel flowed through the storm drainage system at Bradley, discharging to Rainbow Brook in Windsor. DEEP staff continue to assess, monitor and manage the situation. Containment and clean up continues along Rainbow Brook.

UPDATE on AFFF/PFAS Containment & Cleanup

- From the evening of Friday, Oct. 4 through the evening of Sunday, Oct. 6, aeration of the water in Rainbow Brook has generated foam in some spots along the waterway. Foam has been observed near the intersection of Rainbow Road and Stevens Mill Road, as well as in Watts Pond, which is on private property in Windsor Locks. Throughout the weekend, DEEP set up booms and brought in vacuum trucks in these areas to contain and clean up the foam. The containment and cleanup will continue.
- Precipitation over the next several days is likely to aerate dissolved AFFF in the water, causing foam to resurface in the vicinity of Rainbow Brook. And high winds could possibly carry foam to other areas. The public is advised not to come into contact with foam they may encounter. Report foam sightings to DEEP at 860-424-3338.
- No foam has been observed on the Farmington River at this time. As a reminder, fire suppression water runoff from the crash was released to the storm drain, not the sanitary sewer.
- DEEP collected surface water samples from Rainbow Brook and the Farmington River. The samples will be analyzed for PFAS and other substances associated with the incident. Results are expected this week.
- The existing fish consumption advisory remains in place for the Farmington River downstream of Rainbow Dam in response to the June 8, 2019 AFFF release from a private hangar at Bradley.

DEEP Response

- DEEP ERU directed emergency contractors to provide vacuum trucks for removing the AFFF/fuel/propylene glycol mixture at the crash site. In addition, a containment dike and booms were placed along Rainbow Brook at Trap Rock Road, and vacuum trucks were deployed to collect the AFFF/fuel discharge at this location. DEEP is overseeing continued environmental cleanup at the crash site and directing the clean-out of the storm drainage system leading to Rainbow Brook. Wastewater is being containerized for proper disposal.
- Based on information available to DEEP, the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Windsor Health Department, no private wells are at risk from fire suppression water runoff containing PFAS or other substances originating from the incident discharging to Rainbow Brook.
- Initially, it was believed that the fire suppression water runoff containing PFAS and fuel was discharging to the sanitary sewer. As a precaution, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) was notified, and a containment boom was placed at the outfall of Poquonock Water Pollution Control Facility on the Farmington River in Windsor. It was later determined that the release occurred to the storm drain, not to the sanitary sewer.
- Two trucks containing propylene glycol were impacted by the crash. Although both trucks were damaged, only one truck was leaking. Approximately 800 gallons of propylene glycol was removed from each truck (total of 1,600 gallons). No other releases of chemicals or environmental impacts were found at the de-icing facility.
- Remaining aviation fuel was removed from the scene and the airplane tanks. The exact quantity is unknown at this time.

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