

Leaking AST from Petroleum Distributor in Eugene, Oregon Leads to Oil Sheen on Willamette River

by James Hart

A leaking **aboveground storage tank** (AST) from a petroleum distributor in Eugene, Ore., led to an oil sheen on the Willamette River, according to the **Oregon Department of Environmental Quality** (DEQ). Company officials and DEQ were unsure as to how long the tank had been leaking, but both estimate that about 500 gallons of diesel fuel had escaped the tank by the time it was discovered.

Tyree Oil, Inc. is an Oregon-based distributor of petroleum products and services, delivering commercial gasolines, diesel fuels and kerosenes to customers along the Eugene area. According to DEQ officials, the company reported that one of their oil storage tanks was leaking on Saturday, Jan. 24.

DEQ stated that company representatives were unsure as to how long the tank had been leaking, but roughly 500 gallons of diesel had been accounted for during cleanup.

Both DEQ officials and environmental cleanup consultants hired to conduct the site's cleanup activities believed that the leak was contained that same day, but the rain from the weekend helped to push the leaking diesel fuel into the Willamette River, less than a mile away. According to DEQ, the leak also seeped underground and could have migrated into a nearby storm sewer during the rain.

The **Eugene Fire Department** was the first to respond to reports of the oil sheen seen on the river that weekend. Soon after, Tyree Oil, DEQ representatives and North-West HazMat, an environmental consultant group, started working on cleanup efforts along the river. Absorbent booms were placed along the river to contain the spill and extract the contaminated water. Cleanup work continued well into the weekend, as DEQ tried to determine the size of the spill.

DEQ stated that Tyree Oil representatives were unsure as to how long the tank had been leaking, but roughly 500 gallons of diesel had been accounted for during cleanup. The spill affected nearly 250 feet of riverfront. Some of the fuel was also collected from a nearby stormwater treatment filter.

According to DEQ spokesman Wes Gebb, ASTs are not regulated in Oregon aside from fire code provisions, and the state does not have primacy for federal spill prevention, control and countermeasure provisions. DEQ stated that the company had been responsive and cooperative about the incident, but any discharge of oil into state waters could be a violation of state statutes and could result in fines and civil penalties.

Gebb stated that as of Feb. 1, Bergeson-Boese, an environmental contractor hired by Tyree Oil, was still conducting emergency containment and cleanup actions. So far, over 150 gallons of diesel fuel have been collected from the river and surrounding area.