

FACT SHEET

Oil Leak & Cleanup at Pepco's Potomac River Substation

- **What happened?**

On Sunday, Jan. 23, nontoxic mineral oil leaked from one of Pepco's high-voltage transformers at our substation in Alexandria, Va.
- **How much oil was leaked?**

The majority of the nontoxic mineral oil remained in the emergency containment reservoir or in the transformer; however, a quantity of the mineral oil – first estimated at 5,500 gallons – escaped.
- Approximately 4,000 gallons remain unaccounted for, are presumed to have entered the river and may be unrecoverable.
- **What did Pepco do about the leaked oil?**
 - As soon as the leaked nontoxic mineral oil was detected in the river water, it was contained by absorbent booms.
 - In the days immediately following Sunday's leak, Pepco's contractors and employees worked 12-hour shifts around the clock to recover all the collectible deposits of mineral oil from land and water. Since then, they have continued working as conditions have allowed.
- **How much of the mineral oil have you captured and secured?**
 - Approximately 80 percent of the nontoxic mineral oil was captured in the emergency containment reservoir or remained in the transformer and was secured and removed from the site for recycling or disposal.
 - The transformer held approximately 21,500 gallons of nontoxic mineral oil.
- **Did you test the mineral oil in the leaking transformer for PCBs?**

Yes. We followed EPA protocols for testing the mineral oil, and compared the results to EPA standards to ensure they met EPA requirements.
- **Did you find any PCBs in the mineral oil used in the leaking transformer?**

No.
- **What are the workers doing along the shoreline?**

Some of the material along the shoreline – such as refuse and rocks – had contact with the leaked mineral oil. We are working to clean or remove these slightly oiled materials for proper disposal. Since our contractors needed to cut and remove some dead wood, you might therefore have heard the buzzing of chainsaws, but we promised and delivered two things:

 - the work was completed as quickly and safely as possible, thereby minimizing the noise; and
 - no live trees or shrubs were cut during the cleanup.
- **What are we planning to do in the future?**

Crews are continuing the cleanup along the shoreline to remove residual mineral oil and prevent any further sheening.

- **Why do I see a sheen on the river nearby and downstream?**
 - Some mineral oil had moved into the river before the booms were in place.
 - The escaped mineral oil forming the sheen that you see in the river is very insubstantial – less thick than the smallest human hair – and it will disperse over time with the aid of wind, tides and (eventually) hot sunlight.

- **What is Pepco doing about wildlife in the vicinity of the leak?**
 - Pepco worked with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and Pepco's contractor, Tri-State Bird Rescue & Research, Inc. (TSBRR), to conduct field (i.e., land and water) surveys of birds and waterfowl at the nontoxic mineral oil release site and surrounding areas.
 - The surveys were designed to evaluate any potential impacts to certain species that may have been vulnerable to contamination by the leaked nontoxic mineral oil.
 - The wildlife assessment concluded that there was minimal wildlife impact as a result of the recent leak of nontoxic mineral oil.
 - The TSBRR team observed a total of 1,032 birds over four days of patrolling land and water along shore; they patrolled the river and shore from the release site to National Harbor in Prince Georges County, Md. These observations took place during both low and rising tides and in varying weather conditions.
 - Of the 1,032 birds observed, only two birds demonstrated behaviors of potential oiling.
 - Pepco will continue to coordinate with regulators, animal support agencies and members of the community to monitor wildlife in the area adjacent to the leak; we will have response teams available to care for any wildlife that may have been impacted by the nontoxic mineral oil release.

- **More questions?**
 - If you have a specific question or concern that has not been addressed here or on our Web site, please call the
Pepco Potomac River Cleanup Hotline: 202-872-2337.