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By July 17, 2025 / 7:18 PM EDT / CBS New York Oil has stopped flowing into Long Island's Mill River, but not before an estimated 1,000 gallons of greasy fluid leaked into the waterway that leads to the Atlantic Ocean.It was all hands on deck as PSEG Long Island contractors kept working to contain the spill Thursday in East Rockaway after an underground electrical transmission cable surrounded by a cooling oil started leaking Monday.Hundreds of gallons of oil leak into Long Island riverWith state oversight, PSEG Long Island contractors removed hundreds of gallons of oily water and set up containment booms in the East Rockaway Channel after fluid leaked into the Mill River."Literally, it looks just like a rainbow on the water and you can see the oil," Joey Leggio, an Oceanside boat captain, said. Oil has stopped flowing into Long Island's Mill River, but not before an estimated 1,000 gallons of greasy fluid leaked into the waterway that leads to the Atlantic Ocean after an underground electrical transmission cable surrounded by a cooling oil started leaking, PSEG Long Island says. July 17, 2025. CBS News New York "A lot of people used to go swimming here. Now, how are you going to go swimming in this water now?" Dominic Decrescenzo, of East Rockaway, said. PSEG Long Island said the source of the dielectric fluid leak was discovered Wednesday night. The fluid is similar to mineral oil, which is nonhazardous, the utility said.The flow of fluid was stopped and crews started repairing the cable, the utility said.Crews wash swans and ducksEnvironmental crews also took time to wash off greasy swans and ducks. Though the fluid was deemed nonhazardous, at least two ducks died and good Samaritans have been finding other injured birds."Any sort of foreign substance on a bird's feathers is extremely hazardous to them. It negates their ability to control their own temperature, it stops them from being buoyant. So that they can sink down into the ocean and actually drown," John Di Leonardo, with Humane Long Island, said. Long Island environmental crews washed oil off of ducks and swans after a spill in the Mill River in East Rockaway. Gerard Biscardo, Crows Nest Marina Long Island environmental crews washed oil off of ducks and swans after a spill in the Mill River in East Rockaway. Gerard Biscardo, Crows Nest Marina "It's a shame. It's really sad, these poor birds," Leggio said. Several Long Island rescues, including the Wildlife Center of Long Island and Sweetbriar Nature Center, have stepped up to help rehabilitate the birds.PSEG Long Island also said it understands residents' concerns about the cleanup and that it was working to address the issues, while emphasizing the fluid is not hazardous.PSEG Long Island statement on Mill River fluid leakThe utility's full statement is as follows:On Monday, July 14, PSEG Long Island removed an underground transmission cable from service because of a leak of nonhazardous dielectric fluid. Crews have located the leak and are working around the clock to make repairs to the affected cable. The flow of dielectric fluid has ceased.This transmission cable running beneath the Mill River Bridge along Atlantic Avenue in East Rockaway provides critical electric service for customers throughout western Nassau County. PSEG Long Island is working in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to remediate the nonhazardous fluid, which is similar to mineral oil. PSEG Long Island has also been in close contact with town and village officials to keep them apprised of the work being performed.PSEG Long Island is also working with our partners in wildlife conservation. They are aware of the situation. If members of the public believe they have encountered birds that have come into contact with remaining dielectric fluid in the containment systems, they can call the Wildlife Center of Long Island, which accepts larger birds such as swans, at 516-674-0982, or Sweetbriar Nature Center at 631-979-6344. We ask the public not to interrupt our crews so they can remain focused on safely completing this intensive, emergency work as quickly as possible. Carolyn Gusoff Carolyn Gusoff has covered some of the most high profile news stories in the New York City area and is best known as a trusted, tenacious, consistent and caring voice of Long Island's concerns. LEFT: Smoke is visible from controlled burns of the oil released during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. This was the largest oil spill in U.S. waters (Credit: NOAA). RIGHT: A rainbow sheen on the water is one indication that there may be oil floating on the surface (Credit: NOAA). Oil is a fossil fuel. Fossil fuels (oil, natural gas, and coal) are materials formed over millions of years from the remains of ancient plants and animals. We use oil to heat our homes, generate electricity, and power large sectors of our economy. But when oil accidentally spills into the ocean, it can cause big problems. Oil spills harm sea creatures, make seafood unsafe to eat, and can even ruin your day at the beach. Oil is found below ground or below the ocean floor in pores or holes in the rock called reservoirs. After drilling down and pumping out the crude oil, it is transported by pipes, ships, trucks, or trains to processing plants called refineries. Here the crude oil is broken down so it can be made into different petroleum products, including gasoline and other fuels as well as products like asphalt, plastics, soaps, and paints. Sometimes accidents happen when removing the crude oil from underground or in transporting it by ship or pipeline to a refinery. These accidents can spill oil into the environment. Large oil spills are major, dangerous disasters. These tend to happen when pipelines break, big oil tanker ships sink, or drilling operations go wrong. Ecosystems and economies can feel the consequences for decades following a large oil spill. Where do oil spills come from? Oil spills can happen anywhere oil is drilled, transported, or used, and they are more common than you might think. Thousands of oil spills occur in U.S. waters each year. Most of these spills are small, for example, oil may spill while refueling a ship. But these spills can still cause damage, especially if they happen in sensitive environments, like beaches, mangroves, and wetlands. Accidents involving tankers, barges, pipelines, refineries, drilling rigs, and storage facilities are the most common cause of oil spills, but recreational boats can also release oil out on the water or in marinas. Spills can be caused by: people making mistakes or being careless equipment breaking down natural disasters and severe weather such as hurricanes, storm surge, or high winds deliberate acts by terrorists, acts of war, vandalism, or illegal dumping Oil can be spilled anywhere oil is extracted, transported, or used. (Credit: NOAA.) Learn more about where oil spills come from. Crude oil, the liquid remains of ancient plants and animals, is a fossil fuel that is used to make a wide range of fuels and products. Oil is found below ground or below the ocean floor in reservoirs, where oil droplets reside in pores or holes in the rock. After drilling down and pumping out the crude oil, oil companies transport it by pipes, ships, trucks, or trains to processing plants called refineries. There it is refined so it can be made into different petroleum products, including gasoline and other fuels as well as products like asphalt, plastics, soaps, and paints. Oil spills are more common than you might think, and they happen in many different ways. Thousands of oil spills occur in U.S. waters each year. Most of these spills are small, for example when oil spills while refueling a ship. But these spills can still cause damage, especially if they happen in sensitive environments, like beaches, mangroves, and wetlands. Large oil spills are major, dangerous disasters. These tend to happen when pipelines break, big oil tanker ships sink, or drilling operations go wrong. Consequences to ecosystems and economies can be felt for decades following a large oil spill. Where do oil spills happen? Oil spills can happen anywhere oil is drilled, transported, or used. When oil spills happen in the ocean, in the Great Lakes, on the shore, or in rivers that flow into these coastal waters, NOAA experts may get involved. The Office of Response and Restorations mission is to develop scientific solutions to keep the coasts clean from threats of oil, chemicals, and marine debris. Largest oil spills affecting U.S. waters since 1969-2024. (NOAA/Office of Response and Restoration) Where the oil is spilled, what kinds of plants, animals, and habitats are found there, and the amount and type of oil, among other things, can influence how much harm an oil spill causes. Generally, oil spills harm ocean life in two ways: Fouling or oiling: Fouling or oiling occurs when oil physically harms a plant or animal. Oil can coat a birds wings and leave it unable to fly or strip away the insulating properties of a sea otters fur, putting it at risk of hypothermia. The degree of oiling often impacts the animals chances of survival. Oil toxicity: Oil consists of many different toxic compounds. These toxic compounds can cause severe health problems like heart damage, stunted growth, immune system effects, and even death. Our understanding of oil toxicity has expanded by studying the effects of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Wildlife recovery, cleaning, and rehabilitation is often an important part of oil spill response. However wildlife is difficult to find and catch, oil spills can happen over wide areas, and some animals (like whales) are too big to recover. Unfortunately, its unrealistic to rescue all wildlife impacted during oil spills. The U.S. Coast Guard is primarily responsible for cleaning up oil spills, while NOAA experts provide scientific support to make smart decisions that protect people and the environment. There are different equipment and tactics that trained experts can use to contain or remove oil from the environment when a spill occurs. Booms are floating physical barriers to oil, which help keep it contained and away from sensitive areas, like beaches, mangroves, and wetlands. Skimmers are used off of boats and can skim oil from the sea surface. In situ burning, or setting fire to an oil slick, can burn the oil away at sea, and chemical dispersants can break up oil slicks from the surface. However, cleanup activities can never remove 100% of the oil spilled, and scientists have to be careful that their actions dont cause additional harm. After the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, scientists learned that high-pressure, hot-water hoses used to clean up beaches caused more damage than the oil alone. Sensitive habitats need extra consideration during oil spill cleanup. Who pays for oil spill cleanup and restoration? The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 established (among other things) that those responsible for oil spills can be held responsible to pay for cleanup and restoration. This process of assessing the impacts of a spill and reaching a settlement to fund restoration projects is called Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). Federal, state, and tribal agencies work together with the party responsible for the oil spill throughout NRDA and select restoration projects with help from the public. Working with partners from state, tribal, and federal agencies and industry, NOAA helps to recover funds from the parties responsible for the oil spill, usually through legal settlements. Over the last 30 years, NOAA has helped recover over $9 billion from those responsible for the oil spill to restore the ocean and Great Lakes. When a person gets sick, a doctor evaluates their symptoms, diagnoses a problem, and then prescribes a treatment to help them get better. Thats also what NOAA experts do after an oil spill: they evaluate what happened, assess the impacts, and then design restoration projects to help the ocean recover. Restoration isnt the same as cleanup. It requires projects like building marshland or protecting bird nesting habitat to actively bolster the environment. Restoration projects are important because they speed up the amount of time it takes for different species and habitats to recover. In addition to restoring habitats, the group responsible for the spill may also be held accountable for restoring access to natural spaces by constructing parks, boat ramps, and fishing piers. What are the largest marine oil spills in American history? There are three oil spills that stand out in American history, each of which was the largest oil spill into American waterways at the time. In 1969, a blowout on an offshore platform off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, spilled over four million gallons of oil. In 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker ran aground in the Prince William Sound in Alaska, spilling over 11 million gallons of oil. The largest marine oil spill in all of U.S. history was the Deepwater Horizon spill. On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred on the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform in the Gulf of America, killing 11 people. Before it was capped three months later, approximately 134 million gallons of oil had spilled into the ocean. That is equivalent to the volume of over 200 Olympic-sized swimming pools. An $8.8 billion settlement for restoration was reached in 2016, and restoration is still continuing today. Though we tend to be the most familiar with the massive incidents like Deepwater Horizon, did you know that thousands of smaller oil spills occur each year, some spilling less than a barrel of oil? Oil spills, in addition to nonpoint source pollution, threaten our ocean ecosystem. Learning about pollution, as well as our role in our ecosystem, can help protect ocean habitats by improving stewardship behaviors. Oil spills are disasters that can have severe social, economic, and environmental impacts.They are the release of crude oil or refined petroleum products from tankers, rigs, wells, and offshore platforms.These spills are most common in marine environments but can also occur on land. They can have disastrous consequences for local ecosystems, and be expensive due to the loss of oil and the costs involved in their clean-up.The number of oil spills and the quantity of oil that is spilled from tankers has fallen substantially in recent decades.1On this page, you can find all our data, visualizations, and writing relating to oil spills. Specifically, this refers to oil spills from tankers container ships transporting oil where consistent, high-quality global data is available.But not all oil spills come from tankers. They can also come from other sites, such as offshore oil rigs and damaged pipelines. The world's largest (and most well-known) event was Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. This disaster was caused by an explosion in a drilling rig. The US Government estimates that 4.9 million barrels of oil were released (equivalent to around 700,000 tonnes).Tracking non-tanker oil spills is essential, but we are unaware of any global, updated databases that include this. Filling this gap would be critical to global environmental data and monitoring.

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