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DEC in Unified Command to oversee TAPS spill response

(Juneau, Alaska) – The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation responded aggressively to Tuesday’s oil spill at the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) Pump Station 9. The facility is near Delta Junction. DEC spill responders are on scene, and working in a Fairbanks emergency response center set up by TAPS operator Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. to manage the incident. Vacuum trucks and clean-up equipment are being staged near the spill site.

Working with federal regulators and Alyeska in a Unified Command, DEC is overseeing the cleanup response plan. Its top priority is safety of responders and the public. Before cleanup can begin, spill experts are assessing conditions to ensure protection of those preparing to work at the site.

DEC is the lead state agency on this incident. Representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Labor have also responded to the spill to assure all appropriate measures are in place.

The spill occurred yesterday at approximately 10:30 a.m. when power failed during scheduled maintenance. Without power a reserve tank overflowed and oil spilled out onto a lined secondary containment area. Operators manually closed the valve to stop flow into the tank. There is still some oil seeping from its top vents. The tank is damaged and will have to be drained.

When there is an oil spill, bringing in a power source presents risks. Responders are evaluating conditions associated with re-energizing the pump station. They are also evaluating components associated with removing oil from the secondary containment.