**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**
**Division of Spill Prevention and Response**
**Prevention Preparedness and Response Program**
***SITUATION REPORT (SITREP)***


**CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS SITREPS ARE DENOTED IN RED**

# Hilcorp Natural Gas Leak from 8-inch Pipeline

**SITREP #:** 4

**SPILL #:** 17239903801

**TIME/DATE OF DISTRIBUTION:** 4:30 p.m. March 14, 2017

**POTENTIAL RESPONSIBLE PARTY (PRP):** Hilcorp Alaska, LLC (Hilcorp)

**INCIDENT LOCATION:** Cook Inlet between Platform A and Nikiski. (Lat/Long: 60.776367, -151.43365)

**TIME/DATE OF SPILL:** Unknown

**HOW/WHEN SPILL WAS DISCOVERED AND REPORTED:** A Hilcorp helicopter flying between Nikiski and Platform A around 3 p.m. on February 7, 2017, identified bubbles resulting from a natural gas leak. Hilcorp reported the gas leak to the National Response Center and to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) at 4 p.m. on the same day.

**TYPE/AMOUNT OF PRODUCT SPILLED:** The natural gas being released is not natural gas from the platform. The gas is processed dry natural gas (98.67% Methane), providing fuel gas to four platforms: Platform A, Platform C, Dillon Platform and Bakers Platform. The exact amount of gas released to water is unknown at this time. Hilcorp reported the line pressure up to February 13 was approximately 195 psi. On March 4, 2017, Hilcorp reduced the line pressure to 157 psi and on March 13, Hilcorp further reduced the line pressure to 145 psi. Hilcorp reported the leak rate is now between 193,000 to 215,000 cubic feet per day.

**CAUSE OF SPILL:** The cause of the leak is unknown at this time and is being investigated.

**SOURCE CONTROL:** The 8-inch pipeline is an underwater pipeline at approximately 80 feet below Cook Inlet waters. No source control has been achieved at this time.

**RESPONSE ACTION:** Hilcorp was able to conduct daily overflights from March 1 through 13, except on March 11 due to weather conditions. The sea surface bubbles from the natural gas leak could not be detected during any of the overflights due to pan ice covering the affected area.

On March 9, Hilcorp conducted an extended overflight of Upper Cook Inlet's shorelines between Anchorage and Southern Kalgin Island with three ADEC representatives, and two Alaska Department of Fish and Game representatives. Hundreds of birds were observed on the western side of the inlet, but none were detected near the bubble field. A second wildlife reconnaissance flight was conducted by one CISPRI protected species observer and one wildlife professional from International Bird Rescue. The overflight covered approximately 20 square miles surrounding the natural gas leak location. No Beluga whales or marine mammals were observed during either flight, and birds were not observed within 20 miles of the gas release.

Hilcorp is continuing to monitor the pressure and flow rate to ensure the release rate does not change.

In response to ADEC's letter, dated February 27, Hilcorp submitted a sampling and monitoring work plan on March 8. On March 13, ADEC provided preliminary concurrence to implement the sampling and monitoring work plan. ADEC may ask for modifications, clarification or operational changes in the future as a result of sampling and monitoring results.

ADEC continues to be in active communication with Hilcorp, and state and federal resource trustee agencies.

**RESOURCES AT RISK OR AFFECTED:**

***Shorelines*** **-** Shoreline type varies throughout upper Cook Inlet. Shorelines around the East Forelands area include mixed sand and gravel beaches, coarse-grained sand, and exposed tidal flats. Redoubt Bay and Trading Bay on the west side of Cook Inlet include salt and brackish-water marshes and sheltered tidal flats which are of high importance to bird and invertebrate species.

***Marine Mammals*** **-** Species likely to be present in upper Cook Inlet include Cook Inlet beluga whale (Endangered Species Act [ESA]-listed as endangered), western Distinct Population Segment (DPS) Steller sea lion (ESA-listed as endangered), Mexico DPS humpback whale (ESA-listed as threatened), harbor seals, killer whales, Hawaii DPS humpback whales, harbor porpoise, and Dall's porpoise. The Southwest Alaska DPS Northern sea otter (ESA-listed as threatened) is known to occur in lower Cook Inlet. The discharge location is within designated Critical Habitat for Cook Inlet beluga whales. Cook Inlet beluga whales are likely utilizing offshore waters in upper Cook Inlet during winter and will concentrate near forage fish locations as those populations arrive.

***Birds*** **-** Steller's eiders are ESA-listed as threatened and are known to overwinter south of the gas release along both the eastern and western shores of lower Cook Inlet; however, a small portion of this species has been known to overwinter in the Nikiski area. Waterfowl and shorebirds are overwintering in upper Cook Inlet. Notably, rock sandpipers are known to overwinter in upper Cook Inlet feeding on bivalves, including almost the entire population of the subspecies Calidris ptilocnemis ptilocnemis. Bald and golden eagles are also present in Cook Inlet year round. Migratory birds, including waterfowl, seabirds, and shorebirds will likely begin arriving in high numbers in the Cook Inlet area in late March to early April.

***Fish*** **-** Several species and different life stages of fish are likely present in Cook Inlet near the vicinity of the gas release, including all five species of Pacific salmon (Chinook, coho, sockeye, chum, and pink salmon), Dolly Varden, rainbow trout, Pacific eulachon, Pacific halibut (spawning and hatching occurs in winter months), Pacific herring, Bering cisco, Humpback whitefish, American shad, Walleye pollock, sablefish (adults spawn in winter in deep waters, larvae are present at the water surface, and juveniles are found in nearshore waters), Pacific and saffron cod, yellowfin sole, and smelt. This area is Essential Fish Habitat for all five species of Pacific salmon.

**FUTURE PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** Hilcorp will continue to monitor the ice conditions by conducting daily overflights, weather permitting, to determine when it will be safe for diving activities. Hilcorp will continue to monitor the pipeline pressure to ensure there is no sudden decrease in pressure to indicate increased leak. Hilcorp will commence sampling and monitoring, when the sampling platforms and sensors arrive, and as weather permits.

**WEATHER:** Today: Windy with sunshine; high 23°F; winds north at 25 to 40 mph. Tonight: Clear; windy this evening; low 6°F; winds north 20 to 30 mph. Tomorrow: Partly cloudy skies with gusty winds; high near 20°F; winds north northeast 25 to 35 mph.

**COMMAND AND PERSONNEL:**

SOSC: Geoff Merrell, ADEC

**TIME/DATE OF THE NEXT REPORT DISTRIBUTION:** As the situation warrants.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:**

| AGENCY | NAME | PHONE NO. |
|---|---|---|
| ADEC – State On-Scene Coordinator | Geoff Merrell | (907) 269-7682 |
| ADEC – PIO | Candice Bressler | (907) 465-5009 |
| ADF&G | Jeanette Alas | (907) 267-2805 |
| PHMSA | Dave Mulligan | (720) 963-3193 |
| NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service | Julie Speegle | (907) 586-7032 |
| Hilcorp Alaska | Lori Nelson | (907) 777-8300 |

**INCIDENT WEBPAGE:** http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/response/sum_fy17/170215201/170215201_index.htm

**AGENCY/STAKEHOLDER NOTIFICATION LIST:** Please refer to the SITREP distributed March 1 for the agency/stakeholder notification list. The link to the SITREP can be found in the **Incident Webpage** above.