

How do Oil Spills Happen

When we hear about an oil spill that has occurred in some part of the world we may be unaware of just how much oil has been spilled into either the water or on land. When we are talking about an oil spill, we are talking about a huge amount of oil that can do serious damage to the environment in which it was spilled.

How do Oil Spills happen?

Oil spills into rivers; bays and oceans are caused by accidents that usually involve tankers, barges, or refineries. Usually the oil is being transported to another part of the world for various reasons. People who by some form or another make mistakes or are being careless in what they are doing cause the spills themselves. Oil spills are not always caused by human mistake however; sometime machinery can break down which cause oil to spill out into the surrounding environment.

What happens when oil spills occur?

If an oil spill occurs in the ocean, the oil itself will float in salt water. It has been found that if the oil spill occurs in fresh water there is a good chance that the oil will float on top of the water as well. Believe it or not this is a good thing. This means that the oil is confined to the surface of the water, which makes containing the spill a little easier. The problem is that in water the oil will spread out quickly over the surface of the water. The more time the oil is left in the water the more it will spread out to cover a wider surface area, which can have a negative impact on the rate at which it can be contained and corrected.

When oil spills occur in the ocean there is always a chance that the marine life as well as birds and other animals will be negatively affected. Some oil spills have a greater impact on the wildlife then others, but no spill is good. Birds and other animals that are covered in fur, the oil itself actually destroys or breaks down the insulating ability of the fur. For birds, if the fur is covered in oil, the water-repelling abilities of the fur are affected. This exposed the animals to the harsh elements of the environments in which they live. There have been many animals killed as a result of oil spills in the oceans around the world.

Who takes care of Oils Spills?

When an oil spill occurs, who takes care of the problem? There are various, local and federal agencies that can be called upon to take care of oil spills. No matter who is called to take care of the spill the methods employed to clean up the spill are the same. Some agencies will be better equipped to clean up bigger spills whereas local agencies and organizations can handle the smaller, less dangerous spills. It is a criminal offence not to report an oil spill and failure to do so can result in jail time.

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About the Author

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