Rushing to BP’s Aid with Boom & Burn

On April 20, 2010, the Transocean drilling rig, Deepwater Horizon, exploded. This event was immediately devastating as 11 crewmen were killed. The rig sank two days later. As information was being gathered, it was not known how much, if any, oil was being leaked into the Gulf of Mexico.

By Saturday, April 24, an oil leak was reported near the sunken rig. Over the course of the coming months it became the largest oil spill in U.S. history.

Elastec/American Marine was contacted on the morning of April 26 with a request for Hydro-Fire® boom. CEO, Donnie Wilson and VP, Jeff Cantrell drove a truck loaded with equipment towards New Orleans, LA.

While all the resources and options were being gathered and assessed for managing the response, the U.S. Coast Guard announced it would conduct a test using fire-resistant boom to burn the oil floating on the water’s surface. The boom they selected was the Hydro-Fire® boom, manufactured by Elastec/American Marine.

The test was a success and the Coast Guard then authorized controlled burning as a response tool. This is the first time that the technique of burning oil on water in a large scale incident has been proven — reducing the impact on the shoreline and sensitive ecosystem of the Gulf Coast.

After the process of controlled burning was approved, the Elastec/American Marine

crew was given a staging area in Venice, LA to direct burning operations. The initial fleet included the use of four shrimp boats, two supply boats and one dive ship to house the newly formed team. Shortly after the first test burn, Elastec /American Marine employees joined Mr. Wilson and Mr. Cantrell to aid in monitoring and conducting the controlled burns.

By the time the well was capped, a record 411 burns were conducted with some lasting up to 12 hours in duration. On the 18th of June alone, an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 barrels of oil was removed from the marine environment, according to official estimates.

In the beginning, burns would last one hour. As more burns happened, the technique was refined and burns up to 12 hours in duration became possible — removing vast amounts of oil from the marine environment. 219,000 to 309,000 barrels of oil are estimated to have been removed from the marine environment in these controlled burns.

Hydro-Fire® boom systems were brought in from around the world to aid in these controlled burns. As burns became more frequent, new tactics were learned to make burns even more effective. Officials from BP, the United States Coast Guard, as well as Elastec/American Marine and local shrimpers started building large burn teams. It was obvious that burning was a legitimate and effective way to remove spilled oil on the water surface.

Over the course of a few weeks, many unsuccessful attempts had been made to stop the leaking oil. 5,000 feet above the leak, burn teams were eliminating oil at rates that were quickly getting attention.

News media and the general public were curious as to how these burns worked. Elastec/American Marine was becoming a name mentioned around the world through local, national and international news casts.

In the midst of what seemed like constant bad news concerning the leaking well, the burns were being recognized as one of the best alternatives and providing hope as an effective response tool.

As giant smoke plumes bellowed into the sky, people were worried about how it would affect air quality for workers, citizens on shore and the environment in general. The Environmental Protection Agency, stationed with burn teams, conducted studies that showed that the smoke was not as toxic as it appeared.

While the smoke looked quite ominous, it was nothing more than a temporary side effect to solving a larger problem. There was no more environmental impact incurred with the burns than if the oil had been processed and used in its intended purpose.

Reports are currently being compiled on the controlled burning operation. Burns were conducted using several different models of fire boom. Elastec Hyro-Fire® boom proved to be the most successful. In addition to supporting the controlled burning, our company supplied approximately 180 skimmers and 100 miles of containment boom to assist BP and other responders in their clean up efforts.

For more information, please visit www.elastec.com [1].

Source URL (retrieved on *11/28/2014 - 4:49pm*):
http://www.chem.info/articles/2010/10/rushing-bp%E2%80%99s-aid-boom-burn?qt-recent_content=0

Links:
[1] http://www.elastec.com/