

# Crews Working to Contain Oily Liquid in Creek

STEVEN K. PAULSON, Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A Suncor Energy Inc. refinery suspected of leaking hazardous liquids into a Denver-area creek has been under a corrective order for several decades because of contaminated groundwater, a state health official said Tuesday.

The state health department has been monitoring contaminated plumes from the Suncor Energy refinery for years, agency spokesman Warren Smith said.

The facility is likely the source of an oily liquid that has been seeping into Sand Creek about a mile away since Monday. It will take at least 24 hours to identify the chemicals and confirm the source of the pollution, Smith said.

An enforcement letter from the department obtained by The Associated Press notified the company on Oct. 26 that it wasn't doing enough to control pollution from the property and demanded stricter cleanup efforts.

"The department has made this determination based upon the results of investigations at the facility which indicate that recent releases of hazardous waste and hazardous constituents onsite are now migrating offsite in excess of applicable standards," the letter warned.

The state gave the company 30 days to submit a plan to mitigate and halt the migration of contamination offsite. The company was also ordered to monitor Sand Creek and the nearby Burlington Ditch. Smith said such consent orders are "quite common" for companies dealing with hazardous waste.

Suncor is a Canadian company based in Alberta, with a U.S. headquarters in Delaware.

Spokeswoman Sneh Seetal said Tuesday an employee detected an odor on Monday and the company sent cleanup crews even though the source hasn't been determined.

"Our company has made protecting the environment a priority," Seetal said.

EPA spokeswoman Karen Edson said officials worried that the contamination will reach the South Platte River less than a tenth of a mile away, which is a major source of drinking water, wildlife habitat and agricultural water for the Midwest.

Protective booms set up across the water have recovered about 50 gallons of suspected hydrocarbons, some of which could cause cancer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency coordinator Curtis Kimbel said.

"It's not a large quantity, but it's leaking out of the banks," he said.

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Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

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The EPA was overseeing the company's cleanup efforts, while state officials are conducting tests of monitoring wells to see what might be causing the contamination.

**Source URL (retrieved on 04/01/2015 - 1:50am):**

<http://www.chem.info/news/2011/11/crews-working-contain-oily-liquid-creek>