

Let's SOAR!

Stop Pollution
Obey Laws
Always Improve
Reduce Waste



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If you would like to contribute
to this newsletter, please
contact Sarah Otto.

sarah.otto.1@us.af.mil

EARTH DAY

April 22nd

SARAH OTTO

This April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, which has become the largest secular observance on the planet. Earth Day has been observed globally since 1990, but its beginning was a grass roots movement in the US on thousands of college, university, and grade school campuses.

The environmental movement was inspired in no small part by a book written by Rachel Carson, titled *Silent Spring*, bringing awareness of the dangers of pollution to the American public. And then there was the Santa Barbara Oil spill, one of the largest oil spills in US waters, 3rd behind the 2010 Deepwater Horizon and 1989 Exxon Valdez spills.

On the 28th of January, 1969, a blow-out on an oil platform, 6 miles offshore, and the resulting fissures in the seabed, caused an estimated 3 million gallons of crude oil to leak out into the Santa Barbara Channel and onto the California coastline. An estimated 3,500 sea birds, as well as an unknown number of marine animals such as dolphins, elephant seals, and sea lions were killed in the 800 square-mile oil slick.

Media coverage of the incident was intense and sparked the inspiration for Senator Gaylord Nelson to create what we now call Earth Day, which is celebrated by 192 countries across the globe.

JBSA SPILL RESPONSE

MIKE TILLEMA

Picture this: it's a chilly, rainy morning as you and your coworker pull into the office parking lot (you're carpooling because you've realized the cost and environmental benefits, obviously). As you're walking toward the entrance, you notice a distinct fuel odor and rainbow-colored sheen atop the runoff water spanning most of the parking lot. Your coworker notices it as well and asks you what the best course of action is. What do you do?

Being prepared for an emergency, in terms of a fuel spill, isn't just a nicety Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) upholds. It is a federally mandated requirement for any facility that exceeds a certain threshold of total fuels stored to maintain an emergency spill response plan. This requirement, outlined in the Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA) and Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA), came about because of extreme environmental deterioration and catastrophic oil



The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland catches fire in 1969 sparking national environmental concerns.

Source: Ohio History Central

spills. In 1969, roughly two thirds of the nation's lakes, rivers, and coastal waters were unsafe for fishing and swimming; the Cuyahoga River in Ohio literally caught fire multiple times. Twenty years later, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker crashed in the Prince William Sound in Alaska and released almost 11 million gallons of crude oil into the bay. Such events spurred Congress to pass the CWA and OPA.

Because of routine preventative maintenance, inspections, and training, accidents requiring emergency action rarely occur at JBSA. The 802 Civil Engineer Squadron Environmental Compliance Office (802 CES/CEIEC) maintains detailed emergency spill response plans in accordance with federal regulation and guidelines which outline spill prevention practices, control guidelines, and cleanup procedures for all kinds of spill. While these plans require routine training only to Airmen and civilians working directly with fuel or oils and first responders, it is important for all installation personnel to know how to react safely and quickly to mitigate adverse effects to human and environmental health in the event of a fuel spill.

It is important to know how to identify a spill, or release, of a contaminant into the environment and what to do in case one happens. This article specifically pertains to spills of petroleum products (such as gasoline or diesel), oils (such as motor oil or even cooking oil), and lubricants, but can generally be applied to other sources of contamination.

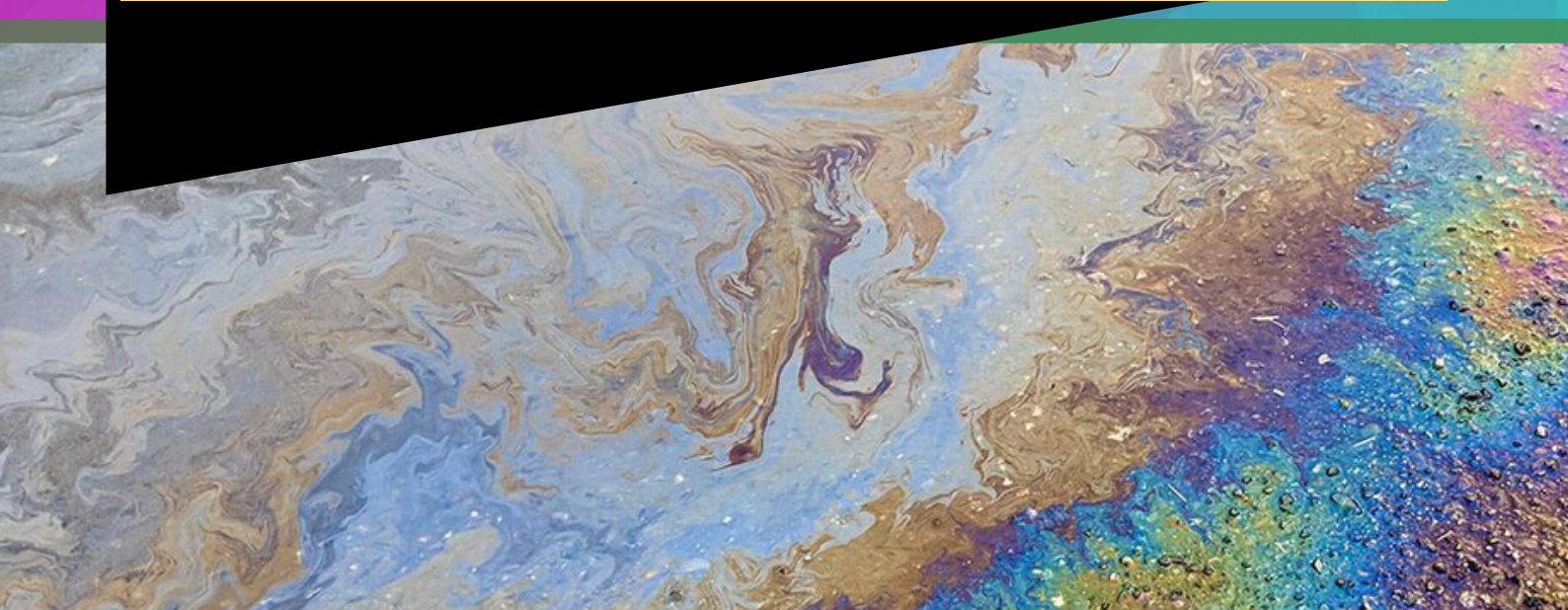
Fuel spills come in all shapes and sizes. Key signs a spill has occurred (aside from witnessing the spill, obviously) are: rainbow sheen (pictured left), oily residue, and odor (think go-kart racing smell), though these vary with different fuels and oils. When in doubt, call 802 CEIEC (see location specific phone numbers below) or if after hours, call 911 or the Energy Management Control System (EMCS) office at (210) 671-2288.

What Would You Do?

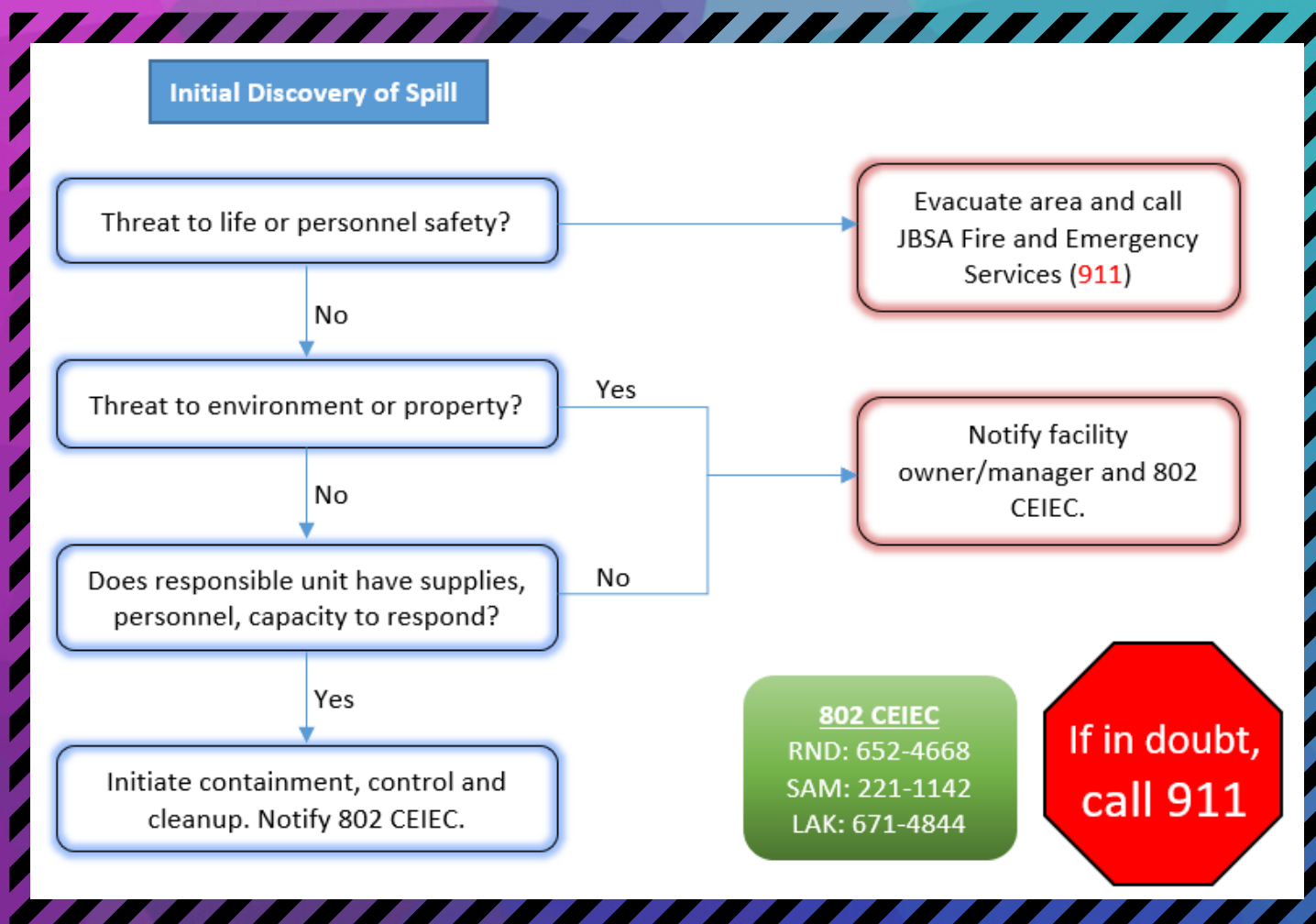
While spills are unlikely, they do happen... think about what you'd do in the following situations:

You and your family are at JBSA Canyon Lake Recreation enjoying the boats, beaches, and amenities. On the way out to the marina where you'll rent your boat and tube to tow, you smell gasoline and notice the fuel lines leading out to the docks have been damaged, and a fuel is leaking out.

You are pumping gas and the guy next to you accidentally forgets to take the hose out of his gas tank and drives off, breaking the pump line. Because gas pumps are equipped with valves to stop flow from the pump in this event, only the gasoline that was in the hose spills onto the ground.



What would you do in the scenarios described in previous pages? Each scenario wasn't imagined – they actually occurred here at JBSA. In responding to any spill, the most important thing is to remain calm and assess the situation. Gather as much information as possible to relay to responders, then follow the below decision flow chart, adapted from JBSA's Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure and Facility Response Plans.



You are on the frontlines of environmental protection. Environmental professionals in the 802 CEIEC rely on Airmen and their families to ensure we keep JBSA a beautiful, thriving, lively defense community. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me at (210) 671-5335 or michael.tillema.2@us.af.mil.