



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on July 29, 2010

## Battling the Oil Spill in Battle Creek, Michigan

There now is an oil leak in the northern part of the United States about which to worry — in Battle Creek, Michigan. Although there were reports that some residents complained of an “oil smell” as early as Sunday, July 25, officials are stating that it was Monday, the following day, when oil burst from a 30” underground pipeline.



The leak, which was stopped on Tuesday, flowed from Talmadge Creek into the Kalamazoo River then toward Lake Michigan. Ordinarily about 190,000 barrels of oil pass through the line each day, beginning in Griffith, Indiana, and traveling to Sarnia, Ontario. Geographically, the leakage took place about 60 miles southeast of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in Calhoun County’s Marshall Township. As of Wednesday, 25 people claiming to be concerned “about health issues” were relocated. Two nearby homes were being evacuated, and it is possible that more evacuations will follow.

Although officials are saying that the cause of the spill is still under investigation by both the EPA and National Transportation Safety Board, the stoppage and cleanup efforts have begun moving along quickly. This may be because the Governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm, had remarked after a Tuesday evening helicopter tour of the 16-mile-long affected area, “From my perspective, the response has been anemic.”

According to [CNN](#), the Canada-based pipeline owner, Enbridge Energy Partners, along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, recently doubled the size of their response teams to contain and clean up the spill. The company has also doubled the number of oil booms and is excavating the broken pipeline to ascertain what went wrong. Vacuum trucks are also at work. The EPA announced it had hired a contractor to help with the cleanup as well. The oil sheen will be studied from the air to ascertain the damage’s extent. There also is worry that floods from heavy rains could cause more problems, with Governor Granholm also concerned that the oil could affect Morrow Lake, a popular recreational site.

According to Enbridge CEO Patrick Daniel, the company, which did stop the leak, is also committed to cleaning up the oil. “Our intent is to return your community and the waterways to its original state,” he said in a Battle Creek news conference.

Residents were being warned to stay away from both the scene of the spill and the oil fumes themselves. Calhoun County health officer Jim Rutherford was quoted as saying, “It’s a very toxic and



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dangerous environment. We don't need people out there trying to get a closer look at the situation." He acknowledged concerns not only about air pollution from the spill but the possible long-term effects on both people and the environment.

Although there is no immediate danger to drinking or ground water at this point, officials for now are warning people not to swim or fish near the area. A wildlife rehabilitation center for treating birds and fish affected by the spill has been established by Enbridge.

Enbridge Energy Partners has set up a website ([www.response.enbridgeus.com](http://www.response.enbridgeus.com)) along with a toll-free number (800-306-6837) for the use of residents and volunteers.

Photo of Jennifer Granholm: AP Images



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