

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Molasses Spill in Honolulu Harbor

Question: When did the spill occur?

Answer: The spill was reported to the U.S. Coast Guard at approximately 8:00 a.m. on Monday, September 9, 2013. The exact time of the spill cannot be determined, but it took place after the morning of Sunday, September 8, when the transfer of molasses onto the Matson ship began.

Question: Where was the spill?

Answer: Honolulu Harbor, near Pier 52, Hawaii

Question: What was the cause of the spill?

Answer: A pipe that was loading molasses onto a Matson ship leaked. The ship was loaded with 1,600 tons of molasses for shipping to the West Coast for processing. The ship left the harbor Monday morning before sunrise and then a dark discoloration of the water at Honolulu Harbor was found.

Question: How much molasses spilled?

Answer: At this time, it is estimated that as much as 1,400 tons of molasses or about 233,000 gallons of the molasses may have entered the harbor.

Question: Can I eat the fish that have died as a result of the spill?

Answer: The public is advised not to consume any of the dead fish that may be found in the area.

Question: Can I go into the water at Keehi Lagoon or Honolulu Harbor?

Answer: At this time, it is advised that you stay out of the water at Keehi Lagoon, Honolulu Harbor, and any other place where warning signs have been posted. When the situation is safe, the Department of Health will remove the warning signs.

Question: Who is the lead agency responding to the spill?

Answer: Hawaii State Department of Health

Question: Who else is helping to respond to the spill?

Answer: State and Federal partners, and Matson

State partners:

- Hawaii Department of Health
- Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources
- Hawaii Department of Transportation

Federal partners:

- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Question: What is being done to monitor the situation?

Answer: The Department of Health and partners are taking the following actions to address the situation:

1. Conducting aerial surveys
2. Collecting and testing water samples from 15 locations around Honolulu Harbor, Keehi Lagoon, and inland streams
3. Removing and testing the dead fish collected
4. Posting warning signs
5. Assessing the impact on coral and the density and dispersion of the spill
6. Patrolling the area on land and sea
7. Establishing an Incident Command



Question: How many fish have died?

Answer: At this time approximately 26,000 dead fish have been collected.

Question: Have any endangered species been impacted by the spill?

Answer: Currently no endangered species are known to be impacted by the molasses spill.

Question: Has the spill moved?

Answer: Yes, the spill is flowing from Honolulu Harbor into Keehi Lagoon and then dissipating into the ocean in response to tides and currents.



Question: Will this spill affect any south shore beaches?

Answer: No, the spill is not expected to affect any south shore beaches as it is dissipating into the ocean.

Question: What can volunteers do to help?

Answer: The best thing the public can do is to help spread the word to not go into Keehi Lagoon or Honolulu Harbor, and to leave fish retrieval to the agencies involved. This will help ensure the safety of the public as well as accurate reporting and testing of the dead fish.