



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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### **DEQ Holding Stolthaven Accountable for Spill**

**BATON ROUGE** – The Department of Environmental Quality continues to work with its state, federal and local partners to address chemical releases from the Stolthaven facility located in Braithwaite in Plaquemines Parish. The company will be required and has already begun to clean up any contamination. Louisiana State Police, DEQ and others continue to oversee the cleanup which includes the re-railing of rail cars, on site oil skimming and off-site orphaned drum recovery, which Stolthaven is financing.

DEQ issued the Stolthaven facility a notice of potential penalty on Sept. 4 for failure to notify in a timely manner. By law, penalties cannot be assessed until after 10 days from this notification. As the investigation continues, there could be additional enforcement actions with the possibility of fines up to \$32,500 per day for each potential violation until the contamination is removed.

“Our first priority is to hold Stolthaven accountable for this incident so that they get this area cleaned up as quickly as possible,” said DEQ Peggy Hatch. “The investigation into the incident continues and many state, local and federal agencies have questions that Stolthaven will answer. DEQ is continuing to provide emergency response, recovery operations and will not stop working until the company cleans up the contamination so our people can get back to their homes.”

Also, DEQ toxicologists reviewed the sampling data from surface water samples taken in Braithwaite near the Stolthaven chemical storage facility that suffered flood damage, which resulted in water and air releases of several chemicals.

There was an octene release early during the flooding event; however, testing results show there was no octene in the surface water at the time of testing. Other samples were analyzed for oil, diesel and petroleum related chemicals. Some levels were found above drinking water standards in the flooded areas outside of the facility. However, the flood water is not considered a potable water source, so these exceedances are not indicative of a human health concern at this time. All detected levels were within the range considered acceptable for primary recreational contact with surface waters which includes activities such as incidental contact with water and wading. DEQ will continue to monitor samples for any abnormal findings.

Citizens should avoid contact with any floodwater. Floodwater contains a variety of contaminants including bacteria, which is naturally occurring. DEQ and others are currently reviewing a sediment sampling plan. Anyone in the area should avoid contact with sediment. Citizens should avoid ingesting floodwater or sediment.

While there have been documented releases from the facility, air monitoring data to date shows there are currently no off-site impacts related to air. DEQ has been on site since Sept. 1 and air monitoring early on at the levee adjacent to the facility, off site, showed varying levels of methyl acrylate that would at time require respiratory protection. There was also a release of octene and lube oil into the water on site that was contained with boom.

DEQ and others involved in the Stolthaven incident will ensure the company cleans up any contamination to the proper standards. Contractors hired by Stolthaven have already begun cleaning up orphaned drums that are located throughout the community. Air monitoring continues throughout the community. Water sampling and sediment sampling will also continue.