

EPA Expands Air Monitoring Efforts in Communities Impacted by Hurricane Ida

Media contacts: R6Press@epa.gov or Press@epa.gov

DALLAS – (Sept. 9, 2021) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expanding air quality evaluations in Louisiana communities affected by Hurricane Ida. Today, at the request of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), EPA will begin air sampling near certain industrial facilities in communities affected by Hurricane Ida. EPA has deployed the ASPECT aircraft to assess potential emissions releases at industrial facilities as power is restored, and the aircraft remains available for additional deployment. EPA is also restarting chloroprene community air monitors around Denka Performance Elastomers in LaPlace, St. John the Baptist Parish. The community monitors had been secured before the hurricane made landfall to prevent damage.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, EPA continues to prioritize all of its environmental and public health programs, including emergency response activities, especially those which address historical inequities in underserved and overburdened communities throughout the U.S.

Community Monitoring

In impacted areas, EPA will use summa canisters to sample ambient air for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including Tentatively Identified Compounds (TICs), and will use air monitors for fine particle pollution, known as PM 2.5, at certain locations specified by LDEQ. The canisters will measure VOCs and TICs using 24-hour samples and PM 2.5 will be measured through continuous monitoring. Sampling will follow EPA-approved methods and protocols. Some of the first locations include:

- Shell Refinery—Norco
- Denka Performance Elastomer—Reserve
- Marathon Refinery—Garyville
- LDEQ's Irish Channel air monitoring site
- Port Fourchon

Samples will be sent to an EPA-certified laboratory for analysis, and data will be posted following EPA's rigorous Quality Control/Quality Assurance protocols. Data should be available within 10 days and posted to EPA's website at response.epa.gov/HurricaneIda.

Denka Performance Elastomer Monitoring

As part of an ongoing effort to monitor and reduce emissions of chloroprene at the Denka Performance Elastomer facility in LaPlace, EPA has been measuring chloroprene emissions for several years and operating a continuous monitoring system since 2020. The continuous monitors and sample canisters were secured prior to Hurricane Ida's landfall. EPA began restarting the continuous monitors this week and expects most will be functioning as normal by Friday, September 10, 2021. More information about these monitors can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/la/laplace-louisiana-background-information>

ASPECT Air Monitoring

On September 2, EPA deployed the ASPECT aircraft to assess industrial facilities identified by the state of Louisiana following Hurricane Ida. ASPECT, or Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology, is EPA's airborne real-time chemical and radiological detection, infrared and photographic imagery platform. ASPECT has completed aerial surveillance of 60 industrial facilities. ASPECT is a unique response asset only available from EPA and will remain available as additional facilities begin start-up operations in the upcoming weeks. EPA ASPECT maps and data summaries can be viewed on <https://response.epa.gov/HurricaneIda>

National Response Center Reports

EPA continues to review reports of spills and releases into the environment by industry in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. The National Response Center is operated by the US Coast Guard and information is available at <https://nrc.uscg.mil/>. Under federal law, facilities must report spills and releases to the environment. To date, EPA has received 43 notifications of inland spills and releases within its jurisdiction. The US Coast Guard receives notifications of any coastal spills, not EPA. As a result of NRC notifications, EPA Office of Compliance and Enforcement has issued ten (10) information requests to facility operators to determine compliance with federal environmental laws during Hurricane Ida. EPA will continue this effort and violations will result in federal enforcement and penalties.

EPA Prepared to Help with Ongoing Response

EPA is providing air monitoring and sampling assistance to augment LDEQ's technical resources that are on-the-ground responding to the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. LDEQ continues to deploy its mobile air monitoring vehicles, collect air samples and send out response personnel with handheld air monitors to gather information for the public. More information and data can be found at <https://airquality.deq.louisiana.gov/>.

EPA continues to support FEMA, state, local, and Tribal partners in response to Hurricane Ida. EPA encourages affected communities to continue staying alert for instructions from local authorities,

especially generator safety precautions, and report any spills or releases to state authorities. Community information and observations are extremely valuable in assisting federal and state first-responders.

EPA continues to provide response updates and safety information in multiple languages to non-government organizations, environmental advocacy groups and communities with environmental justice concerns. Representatives should contact Region 6 EJ Coordinator Gloria Vaughn at vaughn.gloria@epa.gov for more information.

Additional information about EPA's efforts can be found at <https://response.epa.gov/HurricaneIda>.

<https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/public-service-announcements-about-emergencies-and-disasters>

<https://espanol.epa.gov/espanol/anuncios-de-servicio-publico-sobre-desastres-naturales>

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Helpful Public Service Announcements about Emergencies and Disasters in English, Spanish and Vietnamese:

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