



Oil Spill Response and Research

The 2010 Deepwater Horizon rig explosion and your health

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) is part of the National Institutes of Health. From its home in North Carolina, NIEHS responded immediately to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion, by providing safety training for cleanup workers, and initiating the largest research enterprise ever conducted on human health and oil spills.



Credit: Anthony Velasco/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Safety Training

Within days of the explosion, staff from the NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program were on site to ensure cleanup workers were trained to protect their own health and safety, while responding to

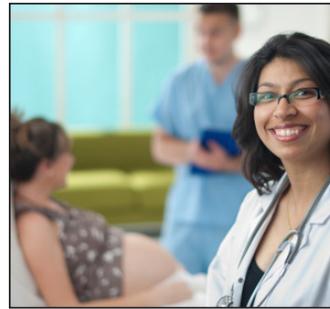
the disaster. Approximately 150,000 workers were trained using NIEHS-developed materials. Many of the trained workers are participating in the NIEHS-led GuLF STUDY. Additionally, NIEHS has teamed with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to evaluate the mental health impacts of environmental disasters on respondents and mental health care providers.



GuLF STUDY

In June 2010, NIEHS initiated the GuLF STUDY, and began research on the health of the workers and volunteers most directly involved in responding to the oil spill crisis. The GuLF STUDY will help determine if oil spills, and exposure to crude

oil and dispersants, affect physical and mental health. Researchers are studying a range of problems, including breathing, skin conditions, self-reported symptoms, blood pressure, and cancer, as well as depression, stress, and anxiety. Almost 33,000 cleanup workers are enrolled in the 10-year health study, making a significant contribution to their communities and to answering important public health questions. For more information, visit <https://gulfstudy.nih.gov>.



University-Community Partnerships

NIEHS awarded \$25.2 million in research grants to Gulf area universities that partner with communities affected by the oil spill. This new research network is addressing health questions specifically

identified by the communities in need. Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, New Orleans; Tulane University, New Orleans; University of Florida, Gainesville; and The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston are the five-year grant recipients. These research teams are evaluating reproduction and birth outcomes, the cardiorespiratory system, general health and well-being, and seafood safety. Researchers are also looking at individual and community resilience post-disaster, and determining the impact they may have on behavior and mental health of children and adults living in the Gulf region. See <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/dert/programs/gulfconsortium>.



Toxicology Research

The National Toxicology Program (NTP), headquartered at NIEHS, obtained samples of the Deepwater Horizon crude oil and dispersants, and is conducting tests to understand the chemistry, biology, and potential toxicological effects. NTP is using this

analytical information to develop a toxicology research program on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), chemicals that are naturally present in crude oil and also formed during the incomplete burning of gas, coal, garbage, or other organic substances.