



# News Release

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## Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Briefing for City Officials

City officials received an update yesterday on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill from representatives of Pinellas County Emergency Management, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Pinellas County Administrator Bob LaSala invited representatives from the 24 municipalities to attend the meeting to learn about preparations and plans in place for potential future impact of oil. According to Commander David Burns, U.S. Coast Guard St. Petersburg Branch Liaison Officer, "The risk of Deepwater Horizon oil impacting the Pinellas County coastline is extremely low due to the oil being over 300 miles away, the prevailing winds and currents, and the decreasing amount of oil in the Gulf. If any oil reached the Pinellas shoreline in the future, it would likely be small quantities of highly weathered tar balls."

The briefing included a summary of preparations for potential future oil landfall:

- **Monitoring** – County staff is briefed regularly on the oil's location and movement. Daily reconnaissance flights and conference calls have been suspended due to the reduced threat of oil impact in western Florida, but county staff would be notified in the future if oil products were observed encroaching a trigger zone located approximately 94 miles off Florida's west coast.
- **Communications** – County staff updates the oil spill website regularly at [www.pinellascounty.org/oilspill](http://www.pinellascounty.org/oilspill). Information includes fact sheets, news releases, volunteer opportunities, and a Frequently Asked Questions document to answer 33 questions from Pinellas County residents such as, "What happens if there is a hurricane?" and "How can I help?"
- **Pre-oil beach cleanup** – Local anti-litter organization Keep Pinellas Beautiful has registered more than 5,900 volunteers for a future pre-oil beach cleanup event if it becomes necessary. The event would be scheduled only if notification was received from the U.S. Coast Guard of potential oil landfall.
- **Tactical plans** – County staff and U.S. Coast Guard representatives have plans in place for preventive booming or cleanup operations, including identification of environmentally sensitive areas, staging locations and boat ramps.

City officials were notified that if tar balls were found on the beach in the future, the U.S. Coast Guard would carry out its regular duties of responding to reports of hazardous material found in the marine environment. A pollution investigator would respond to assess the situation, tar balls would be removed and tested, and a bill sent to BP if the products were associated with the Deepwater Horizon spill.

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