ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH OCTOBER 2, 2019 B-17 PLANE CRASH AT BRADLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Update as of 4:30 p.m. Friday Oct. 11, 2019

At approximately 10 a.m. on October 2, 2019, a World War II era B-17 plane crashed at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks shortly after take-off, impacting a de-icing facility and erupting in flames. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP's) Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and Site Assessment and Support Unit (SASU) responded to the scene to address environmental concerns associated with this tragic incident. Those concerns included releases of (1) aviation gasoline from the plane, (2) propylene glycol associated with the de-icing facility, and (3) aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) containing per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) used to fight the fire.

An estimated 700 to 800 gallons of AFFF concentrate, diluted at 3% to make approximately 22,000 to 25,000 gallons of AFFF solution, was applied by the Bradley Airport Fire Department to fight the petroleum hydrocarbon fire. Bradley is required by the Federal Aviation Administration to have available and use AFFF for responding to incidents such as this. Fire suppression water containing AFFF and fuel flowed through the storm drainage system at Bradley, discharging to Rainbow Brook in Windsor.

UPDATE on AFFF/PFAS Containment & Cleanup

- The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has received surface water sample results collected from affected waterways in the vicinity of the plane crash and data indicate containment actions taken immediately after the incident were effective in reducing environmental impacts.
- Early containment and cleanup measures by airport and DEEP emergency spill response staff immediately following the crash reduced the impact of the release of the materials into the environment; however, some dissolved firefighting materials made it into Rainbow Brook.
- Analysis of surface water samples taken on Oct. 2 and Oct. 3 from numerous locations along the brook indicate the presence of PFAS, with higher concentrations near the outflow from the airport and lower concentrations downstream near the confluence with the Farmington River.
- DEEP collected additional surface water samples from Rainbow Brook and the Farmington River the week of Oct. 7 and will continue to monitor this situation.
- DEEP and DPH staff worked with the Windsor Health Department to identify the location of private wells in the area of Rainbow Brook. All properties in the vicinity of Rainbow Brook were determined to be supplied by the Metropolitan District Commission public water system. No private wells were identified to be at risk from fire suppression water runoff containing PFAS or other substances originating from the plane crash discharging into Rainbow Brook.
- The presence of foam has diminished along Rainbow Brook and on Watts Pond, located on private property. A boom remains located on Rainbow Brook at Trap Rock Road as a precaution.
- The existing fish consumption advisory remains in place for the Farmington River downstream of Rainbow Dam in response to the June 8, 2019 AFFF release from a private hangar at Bradley.

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