

As oil continues to spill into the Gulf of Mexico, from the uncapped well at Mississippi Canyon 252, BP (British Petroleum) and the U.S. federal government are using various means to clean-up the surface waters. By the 10th of May, in 2010, more than 275 vessels—including skimmers, tugs, barges and oil-recovery vessels—are part of a flotilla attempting to deal with the ever-growing spill.

This drawing illustrates the types of methods which workers employ to clean-up the surface waters. The BBC tells us more about those measures:

Skimmers, which skate over the water, brushing up the oil are also being employed and more than 90,000 barrels of oil-water mix have been removed.

Around 190 miles of floating boom are being used as part of the efforts to stop oil reaching the coast. A US charity is even making booms out of nylon tights, animal fur and human hair. Hair donations have been sent from around the world to help make the special booms, which will be laid on beaches to soak up any oil that washes ashore.

Dispersant chemicals, rather like soap, are being sprayed from ships and aircraft in an effort to help break down the oil - which is also degraded by wind and waves.

Burning is another method used to tackle oil spills - although it can be tricky to carry out and has associated environmental risks such as toxic smoke.

So far emergency crews have had little success in containing the spill using those methods.

New underwater technology aimed at stopping crude oil rising to the surface at the site of the leak has had some success.

Until the leaking well is shut, however, all the methods are temporary repairs.

Click on the image for a better view.

Credits:

Drawing from BP, online courtesy BBC.

Quoted passages from BBC news report on 10 May 2010.

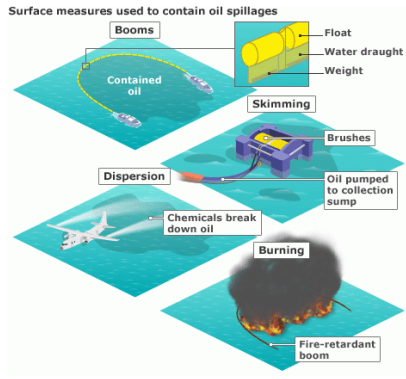
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Media Stream



Gulf Oil Spill - Removing Oil from Surface Waters

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