

# Study: Exxon-like oil spill could devastate Hawaii

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## SPILL: Hawaii does not have a prevention plan

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covery that could raise the total cost to \$400 million, she said.

A panel made up of tourism business owners recommended in the study that some "economically significant coastal sites" such as Waikiki Beach and other resort areas receive first priority for cleanup after a spill.

Most of Hawaii's oil spills since 1983 have been caused by structural and equipment failure, with just 10 percent caused by human error, the report said.

Of Hawaii's 120 reported spills last year, three were caused by human error, 10 were caused by leaks, seven by overflows and structural failure, six by mechanical failure, four by discharges and corrosion and one by grounding. The causes for 47 spills are unknown, the report says.

In the past nine years, more oil spills in Hawaii were reported in the last two years, about 190. Pfund attributes the increase to "better awareness and more stringent regulations."

Most of the spills occurred between Pearl Harbor and Barbers Point.

Pearl Harbor is the most-frequent offender but is in an area where spills can be better contained compared to offshore moorings such as those off Barbers Point, Pfund said. "I would guess that at any given minute there is oil seepage going on (at Pearl Harbor)."

The study showed that weather conditions aren't a significant cause in spills around the world.

Hawaii lacks a plan for the prevention of oil spills, Pfund said. The state's existing contingency plan addresses all hazardous spills, with oil being just one of the materials, Pfund said.

The federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990, created in the wake of the Exxon Valdez catastrophe, formed a \$1 billion fund that enables the federal government to respond quickly to spills. However, the act also inspired oil companies to stop shipping heavy black fuel oil to the neighbor islands because of the potential liability in case of a spill.

The report suggested that Hawaii's super fund, currently fund-

### Just in case

A Department of Health-funded study on oil spills makes these recommendations:

- Institute vigorous procedures for all ship operations at the Barbers Point offshore mooring and bunkering sites.
- Develop a plan for the disposal of oily waste.
- Develop an economic recovery contingency plan.
- Establish standards to evaluate ecologically and biologically sensitive sites.
- Clarify procedures for oil spill response by establishing inter-agency cooperation.
- All oil handling public and private facilities need to develop loss prevention plans and stringent risk control procedures.
- Uniform procedures for assessing damage need to be developed.
- High priority needs to be given to the development of an oil spill data bank that is accessible to all agencies.

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ed with state general funds and fines, could be funded by a 5-cents-a-barrel tax.

Officials should not believe that oil-collecting technology can take care of most spills, Pfund said.

"It is very ineffective" with a 15 percent retrieval rate considered "good," she said.

As for using dispersants, there exists only one agreement between the state and oil companies for their use, the report said.

Pfund suggested that other pacts about cleanup techniques and cooperation between agencies be developed before a major spill occurs.

As for disposing of emulsified oil, oily trash and oil-soaked sorbents and cleanup materials, the reports said the best option is transporting the stuff to the mainland.

A full copy of the study has not been released to the Health Department for comment.

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□ Cleanup costs and lost wages would top \$7 billion

By Tim Ryan  
Star-Bulletin

A catastrophic oil spill here similar to the 1988 Exxon Valdez accident in Alaska would have a devastating effect on Hawaii, a state study says.

It says a major spill of more than 10 million gallons would:

■ Cost the state up to \$6.8 billion in lost tourism revenues and cleanup costs.

■ Force the layoff of as many as 67,000 Hawaii workers for up to two years.

■ Eliminate about \$1 billion in workers' income.

The state Department of Health paid \$100,000 for the study, called "Catastrophic Oil Spill at Sea/Potential Impacts on Hawaii."

Although Hawaii has never had a catastrophic oil spill, the state is particularly vulnerable and officials must do more to prevent spills and protect natural resources, said Rose Pfund, associate director of the University of Hawaii's Sea Grant College Program, which worked on the study.

Hawaii's vulnerability stems from its reliance on maritime shipping for consumer and industrial materials. More than 11,000 ships a year stop at state harbors, and oil provides 90 percent of the state's energy, the study said.

Additionally, Oahu's offshore oil tanker moorings at Barbers Point are particularly sensitive to stormy weather, the report said.

According to the study, Hawaii can expect a 10,000- to 20,000-gallon spill every 2.25 years; a 40,000- to 50,000-gallon spill every 4.5 years; and a spill of 10 million to 11 million gallons every 135 years.

"But the worst-case scenario is not the most probable one to occur, thank goodness," Pfund said yesterday at a meeting co-sponsored by the Maritime Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and other community groups.

The cost of just cleaning up a major spill is \$210 million to \$305 million, not including damage to private property and wildlife re-

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