



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
HALEY BARBOUR, GOVERNOR
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Trudy D. Fisher, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MDEQ RECOMMENDS ENVIRONMENTAL FLOOD PREPARATIONS

(JACKSON, Miss.) – As a result of flooding forecasts and rising water levels for the Mississippi River, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) advises Mississippians to think about possible environmental issues that can result if flooding reaches their homes, farms, and businesses.

“The release of oil, gasoline, or chemicals into flood waters can be a safety hazard, and we are asking homeowners and businesses to take some simple precautions during flood preparations. A few simple measures will save homeowners and businesses money while protecting our waters,” said Trudy Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

MDEQ recommends that tanks such as propane, gas, or diesel be strapped, that chemicals in containers be secured, and household hazardous chemicals such as paints, solvents, and pesticides be placed out of harm’s way. These recommendations are applicable to small businesses, residences, farms, hunting camps, and other buildings near possible flood waters.

More specifically:

- Farmers -- ensure all farm chemicals are secured, properly sealed, closed and out of harm’s way. This includes herbicides, pesticides, treated seeds, fuels, etc. If large storage tanks cannot be emptied or moved, please prepare an inventory which might be used by response officials.
- Households – secure above flood waters or remove harmful household chemicals such as paints, fuel containers, and propane tanks.
- Industry and businesses -- ensure all tanks are emptied and secured. Secure drums, totes, or other chemicals above predicted flood levels or remove. Large bulk storage of any hazardous materials that cannot be dealt with before flooding or are involved in a release due to flooding, please contact MEMA for reporting and assistance.
- All sectors -- mark large tanks of any kind with name, phone number, and address to assist owners’ claims if found. Also mark “empty” on those containers that qualify.
- Owners/operators of Underground Storage Tanks (UST) containing motor fuels. MDEQ staff will be making courtesy visits to convenience stores and service stations likely to be flooded to provide guidance--

1. **Turn off all electricity to the UST system** including power to dispensers, pumps, turbines, automatic tank gauging consoles, lighting, and any other system components.
2. **Take product inventory and water level readings of all USTs** to help account for possible product loss.
3. **Secure all openings on top of the tanks** and make sure all fill caps are in good condition and fastened securely in place and locked. If fill caps are not tightened, tanks will fill with water and release product. Empty or near-empty tanks may float up, destroying overlying concrete/asphalt and distribution lines, which can also release product.
4. **Make sure the seal on the spill bucket plungers (if so equipped) are operational** so water cannot enter the tank.
5. **Close the shear valve on pressurized piping** to prevent releases from product dispenser lines.
6. **Temporarily cap off the vent pipes** to prevent water from entering the tank and displacing product (**this should be the last thing done**). **Do not dispense fuel with the vent pipe capped as this could potentially damage the tank.**
7. **Place a dumpster, sand bag, or large containers full of sand or rock over the tank** to reduce the chance of a tank floating out of the ground.
8. Should you observe a release from a UST or a UST floating out of the ground, contact the **UST Emergency Number 601-214-9930**.

MDEQ requests that if residents observe any releases of oil, gasoline, or chemicals or any stray barrels, waste containers, cylinders and pressure vessels that they promptly report the discovery to the state's 24-hour spill line: **800-222-6362 or 601-961-5171**.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has information about flooding at <http://www.epa.gov/naturalevents/flooding.html>, and hydrologic information from the National Weather Service can be found at <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=jan>.

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