

Communiqué

Oil Spill Incident at Washright Services Ltd, Le Hochet, Terre Rouge

1. The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change has been notified at around 07 40 hours on Monday 11 March 2024 of an oil spill incident. Preliminary information received, indicated that an estimated amount of 1000 litres of Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (LFSO) has spilled during the early morning of 11 March 2024 due to a defective valve in the piping system supplying fuel to the boiler of the laundry at Washright Services Ltd (WSL). The oil spill has reached Rivulet Terre Rouge.
2. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Centre, the National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS), the Mauritius Ports Authority, the Special Mobile Force (SMF), the National Coast Guard and the Solid Waste Management Division were immediately notified of the oil spill by this Ministry. Their assistances were sought for the containment and response measures pending the appointment of cleaning contractors by the owner of the pollutant, that is, by WSL.
3. At around 09 15 hours, measures were taken by WSL to stop further leakage of oil from the defective valve within their premises. Preliminary survey assessment carried out by this Ministry and the NPCS revealed that the oil spill has reached the waters near Pont Bruniquel and the river banks and some traces of oil were also observed in the Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary.
4. Pending appointment of contractors by WSL, assistance of Marine Biotechnology Product Limited (MBPL) was sought for the placement of 9 metres of sorbent booms upstream of Pont Bruniquel. Additionally, the Police Department (SMF) deployed 3 layers of sorbent booms (around 40 metres) along with 30 metres of fence booms downstream of Pont Bruniquel at around 11 00 hours.
5. The services of Polygreen (Mauritius) Ltd for the containment and clean-up of oil spilled, and Virgin Oil Company (Mauritius) Ltd for the pumping and carting away of the contained oil, were hired by WSL. Pumping of the contained oil has started at around 15 00 hours by Virgin Oil Company Ltd. Polygreen Ltd has placed 120 metres of fence boom in the estuary, 25 metres of sorbent boom on the side of estuary and 15 metres sorbent boom upstream of Pont Bruniquel to reinforce the existing 9 metres already placed.
6. In line with section 30 (2) of the Environment Protection Act 2002, WSL was requested to initiate immediate remedial actions to prevent, eliminate, restore the environment to its previous state, dispose of any pollutant and inform this Ministry on daily actions taken at their level for clean-up operations.
7. In line with section 88 of the Environment Protection Act, a Fixed Penalty Notice of Rs25,000 has been issued to WSL by the *Police de L'Environnement* for allowing oil to be deposited in Rivulet Terre Rouge.

8. The National Environmental Laboratory of the Ministry is carrying out sampling of river water and sediments from both Rivulet Terre Rouge and estuary. The Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping will undertake ecological survey and sampling of sea water.
9. The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan which was activated during the MBPL oil spill will now focus on the WSL oil spill and the first meeting of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan Coordination Committee thereon was held on 11 March 2024 at 15 15 hours.
10. Follow up on the cleaning and the regular monitoring of water quality would be maintained by the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, in collaboration with the NPCS and other stakeholders.
11. An enquiry on the oil spill incident will be initiated by the *Police de L'Environnement*.

Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management, and Climate Change
11 March 2024