



Trucking Company Pays Penalty for Gas Spill Near Flathead Lake

High levels of contamination remain in the
main spill pathway

BY BEACON STAFF // MAY 7, 2013 // [LATEST HEADLINES](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today that Keller Transport, Inc. has agreed to pay \$83,500 in penalties after a 2008 truck spill near Flathead Lake.

The tanker truck spill occurred about 500 feet from the shores of Flathead Lake and within the exterior boundaries of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The spill resulted in more than 6,300 gallons of gasoline entering springs along Flathead Lake, impacting groundwater as well as the lake. The proposed settlement addresses violations of the Oil Pollution Act, which prohibits the discharge of oil to waters of the U.S.

“Truck accidents can have a significant impact on the environment and in this case caused a threat to public health,” Mike Gaydosh, EPA enforcement director in Denver, said in a statement.

“This penalty serves as a strong reminder that every effort must be taken to avoid accidents and spills when hauling hazardous materials. EPA will take necessary steps to protect the public.”

Groundwater sampling shows that the area of contamination is decreasing, but there are still high levels of contamination in the main spill pathway, according to the EPA.

The tanker truck accident occurred on April 2, 2008 and was caused by excessive speed around a curve on Montana Highway 35 in Lake County. A tanker trailer hit a rock embankment causing the trailer to rupture.

Gasoline from the tanker discharged onto the embankment directly up gradient from Flathead Lake, impacting the seeps, springs, and adjoining shorelines of the Flathead Lake. Fumes from the spill resulted in the evacuation of five homes along the lake for nearly a year.

EPA, in coordination with CSKT, worked with Keller on the cleanup at the site since April 2008. EPA issued an administrative order to Keller for the remediation activities that were necessary at the site. Remediation activities have included installation of air abatement systems in the affected homes, ongoing air monitoring, removal and appropriate disposal of contaminated soil, and installation of a groundwater collection trench and permanent water treatment system to treat the contaminated groundwater.

Annual air monitoring has indicated that the abatement systems are working properly as there have been no identified indoor air violations in the affected homes in the past three years, according to the EPA. Keller will continue to operate the water treatment system under the requirements of EPA's administrative order until such time as EPA determines that appropriate clean up levels have been met. Keller has complied with all the cleanup requests that have been required.

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