

Keystone pipeline leaks 210K gallons of oil

AMHERST, S.D. (AP) — TransCanada Corp.'s Keystone pipeline leaked an estimated 210,000 gallons of oil onto agricultural land in north-eastern South Dakota, the company and state regulators said Thursday, but state officials don't believe the leak polluted any surface water bodies or drinking water systems.

Crews shut down the pipeline Thursday morning and activated emergency response procedures after a drop in pressure was detected resulting from the leak south of a pump station in Marshall County, TransCanada said in a statement. The cause was being investigated.

Discovery of the leak comes just days before Nebraska regulators are scheduled to announce their decision Monday whether to approve the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline, an expansion that would boost the amount of oil TransCanada is now shipping through the existing line, which is known

simply as Keystone. The expansion has faced fierce opposition from environmental groups, American Indian tribes and some landowners.

Brian Walsh, an environmental scientist manager at the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said the state has sent a staff member to the site of the leak in a rural area near the border with North Dakota about 250 miles west of Minneapolis.

"Ultimately, the cleanup responsibility lies with TransCanada, and they'll have to clean it up in compliance with our state regulations," Walsh said.

TransCanada said in its statement that it expected the pipeline to remain shut down as the company responds to the leak. It did not offer a time estimate, and a spokesman didn't immediately return a telephone message from The Associated Press.

The federal Pipeline and

Hazardous Materials Safety Administration didn't immediately return an email requesting additional information from The AP. Since 2010, companies have reported 17 spills bigger than the leak announced Thursday, topping 210,000 gallons of crude oil or refined petroleum products, according to U.S. Department of Transportation records.

The existing Keystone pipeline transports crude from Canada to refineries in Illinois and Oklahoma, passing through the eastern Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. It can handle nearly 600,000 barrels daily, or about 23 million gallons. TransCanada says on its website that the company has safely transported more than 1.5 billion barrels of oil, or about 63 billion gallons, through the system since operations began in 2010.

President Donald Trump issued a federal permit for the expansion project in March even though it had

been rejected by the Obama administration. The Keystone XL project would move crude oil from Alberta, Canada, across Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines feeding refineries along the Gulf Coast.

Kent Moeckly, a member of conservation and family agriculture group Dakota Rural Action, who opposed the Keystone pipeline, said he drove to land he owns near the site of the spill Thursday.

"There's a heck of a south wind up here today, and man it just stunk of crude oil," said Moeckly, whose property is crossed by the pipeline. "A mile away, but I'll tell you it was like it was next door."

A leak and spill in southeastern South Dakota in April 2016 prompted a weeklong shutdown of the pipeline. TransCanada estimated that just under 17,000 gallons (405 barrels) of oil spilled onto private

land during that leak. Federal regulators said an "anomaly" on a weld on the pipeline was to blame. No waterways or aquifers were affected.

TransCanada said at the time that the leak was the first detected on the pipeline since it began operating, though there had been leaks at pumping stations. One of those leaks happened in southeastern North Dakota in May 2011, when 14,000 gallons spilled after a valve failed at a pumping station near the South Dakota border.

Sierra Club Beyond Dirty Fuels campaign director Kelly Martin said in a statement that the only way to protect against leaks in the future is for Nebraska to reject the Keystone XL pipeline.

"We've always said it's not a question of whether a pipeline will spill, but when, and today TransCanada is making our case for us," Martin said.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Angie Connell, Heidi Carver, Blair Larsen, Steve McCoy, Kim Guzman, Bennett Christianson and Ilah Munro, holding her daughter Kimber, 3, are all concerned citizens that want a four-way stop installed at the intersection of Feedville Road and Edwards Road due to the high volume of vehicle accidents at that intersection.

CROSSING: ‘People blow through those stop signs all the time’

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wheel — but you can't hang on to anything."

Angela Ditchen, who also lives near the intersection, said her husband, Darren, and her sons were involved in a crash in March 2014 where an elderly woman passenger died, and the driver of the car was taken to the hospital. Ditchen said her husband's car flipped, he tore a muscle in his hand, and her youngest son had a seatbelt burn. But other than that, they had few injuries.

"They were lucky," Ditchen said. "I don't know how my boys are alive."

Although the physical impact was fairly minor, Ditchen said the accident has had a lasting impact on her husband.

"Darren gets so much anxiety every time he passes that (intersection)," she said. "It was so hard. My family walked away, but the other family lost their people."

Carry Munro, a firefighter and paramedic with UCFD, also lives near the intersection. He said in the 16 and a half years he's been in the area, he can't remember how many wrecks he's been to at that spot.

"People blow through those stop signs all the time," he said.

"When Dustin had his accident, ODOT did a study and said that on average, 10 people a day run that stop sign," Carver said.

Residents don't understand why county officials haven't added another stop sign at the intersection.

"We have five boys and (the Ditchens) have three kids getting close to driving age," Carver said. "As people who live out there, we want to know — why hasn't there been a traffic revision out there?"

Sheriff Terry Rowan said they had been looking at the intersection, and comparing it to others in the area.

"The intersection at Loop and South Edwards, that's a four-way stop sign," Rowan said. "And there have been no fatalities there."

Rowan said that off the top of his head, he couldn't think of an intersection in the county that had seen as many accidents as the Feedville and Edwards intersection.

According to Umatilla



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pieces of wrecked vehicles, accident reconstruction paint, and a deep rut in the dirt are the remaining evidence of a two vehicle crash that injured two people November 9, at the intersection of Edwards Road and Feedville Road south of Hermiston.

County Sheriff's Office records, since 2012 there have been 11 crashes at that intersection. Two were fatal, two have resulted in major injuries, three yielded minor injuries and four were non-injury accidents. One resulted in a DUI arrest.

Undersheriff Jim Littlefield said there may be additional crashes at the location that Stanfield Police or Oregon State Police have responded to.

Stopping Traffic

Carver said she has discussed the issue with commissioners Bill Elfering and Larry Givens, as recently as last week, after the latest accident.

Elfering said he is aware of the problems at the intersection and that commissioners have discussed it before and will do so again at their board meeting Nov. 22.

He said drivers don't seem to heed the stop sign that's already there, making him question if they would pay attention to another one.

"There's a lot of visibility up and down Feedville, so people think they can see and people just buzz it off," he said.

He said since last week's accident, the sheriff has been discussing a four-way stop at that intersection.

Elfering said the decision to get any sort of traffic revision would need to be approved by the board of commissioners.

He said he didn't know if the board would take action on the intersection at their next meeting, but they will discuss it.

"We'll take testimony from the sheriff, from public

works about what works and what doesn't," he said.

Elfering said as of now, there were several potential solutions to that stop — a four-way stop, a blinking light or a blinking stop sign, as some intersections in Hermiston have.

But he said the commission is concerned that a blinking light would become an object of target practice in a more rural area.

"One shot to those, they cost \$1,500 apiece," he said.

Elfering said after the fatal accident in 2016, the commission discussed making a change to the intersection. Commissioners settled on replacing the regulation stop sign with a larger one.

"It's very visible from a distance."

He added that some level of human error is also involved with many of the crashes.

Carver said she has been frustrated with the lack of action on the intersection, but it won't stop her from continuing to push for a traffic revision.

"After Dustin's accident, they basically told me it would take an act of God to get a sign put there," she said. "Well, I'm god."

Other residents say a solution is even more urgent with the population growth in the area, which has led to more traffic on the rural road.

"There's just a lot more people out there," Scott said. "You just never know if they're going to stop or not."

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SAMPSON: Married for 65 years

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years ago, he protested in frigid winter weather against transportation of megaloads of oil refinery equipment to extract oil in Canada. The megaloads weighed more than 900,000 pounds and spanned 400 feet long and 22 feet wide. Their passage, he said, was an affront to his people's "traditional values and ecological integrity."

On this day, Sampson was on the minds of the men as they prepared to honor him. Sampson's son Don pulled into the drive and talked about his father.

"He was a very humble, but very strong advocate for the tribe," Don said. "Our treaty rights, our traditional foods, our culture."

"He fought for our way of life," said Eagleheart, leaning against a pickup truck. "He stood up."

They said Sampson's deeply embedded values came partially from growing up in his rich native culture — riding horses, fishing the rivers and hunting in the forest.

"He fished Celilo as a young man," Don said. "He rode horses and had 20 of his own. All summer long, he'd ride into the mountains with his cousins and they'd round up horses. They'd bring back hundreds."

Don's smartphone vibrated and he glanced at the screen. It was a text from Robert Kennedy Jr.

"I just heard the sad news about Chief Carl," Kennedy had texted. "You and your family are in my prayers. Let me know if I can be helpful. Love to you all."

The message joined others from luminaries such as former Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski



Contributed photo
Chief Carl Sampson sits with great-granddaughters Alanah Eagleheart and Avery Quaempts at the 2016 Indian Beauty Pageant.

"When he said something, you listened because you knew it was important."

— Arleta Sampson, Carl Sampson's wife

and Portland business magnate Jordan Schnitzer.

Later, by phone to the *EO*, Jordan Schnitzer praised Sampson and said he planned to travel Friday to attend the Washaht service at the Mission Longhouse.

"Chief Carl Sampson was a remarkable man," Schnitzer said. "Not only was he the chief of a proud tribe, he was a proud Oregonian and a bridge between cultures."

Don put his phone back in his pocket and resumed his remembrances.

In his youth, Don said his father boxed in the reservation version of Golden Gloves. He also played football and basketball during years at Pendleton High School and the Chemawa Indian School in Salem. In his later years, he enjoyed sports by watching from the grandstands.

Sampson's health had weakened of late, but he hadn't stopped living life. The night before his death,

he cheered his grandson, Dylan Abrahamson, who played with his Sunridge Middle School basketball team. On Thursday Dylan was scheduled to play again but he assumed he would skip the trip in honor of his grandfather. Sampson's wife, Arleta, told Dylan to go.

"I told him to go and play hard for his grandpa," said Arleta, who had finished cleaning her house with rose water and stepped out to the porch.

She smiled when she thought of the man who once hitchhiked all the way from Texas — where he was stationed in the Air Force — to ask her hand in marriage. They enjoyed 65 years together.

She said people listened to Carl when he spoke.

"When he said something, you listened because you knew it was important," Arleta said.

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DUI: State total for DUI arrests in 2016 was 8,484

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officers, and two officers attending the month-long supervisor training in Plano, Texas," he said.

All the change, he said, helps account for the decline in arrests. But Hermiston police catching impaired drivers could take a quick tick up.

"Even though he had a lot of change, we will be out there in an overtime capacity working on grants specific to impaired driving this holiday season," Edmiston said. "It's still important for us to be proactive."

He also said staff are settling into their new roles and the department is gaining traction after so much transition. But some shake-up is coming. Edmiston said he is re-arranging team assignments for his officers. Having different officers work together, he said, is a benefit for the department.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said while the number of DUI arrests from 2016 and this year are consistent, they are down from the 158 the department had in 2015. Like his Hermiston counterpart, Roberts said these

By the numbers		
Police department arrest totals for driving under the influence of intoxicants:		
YEAR	HERMISTON	PENDLETON
2014	103	110
2015	83	158
2016	90	137
2017*	50	119
*as of mid November		

fluctuations have more to do with staffing than a lack of intoxicated drivers.

Oregon law enforcement agencies made 3,915 arrests for DUI through the second quarter of this year, according to the "State Of Oregon Report Of Criminal Offenses And Arrests." The statewide total for 2016 was 8,484 and 2015 was 7,987.

Crashes involving drunk drivers increases this time of year. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 37,461 people died in traffic crashes in 2016, and 28 percent (10,497) of those fatalities were in crashes with a driver who had a blood alcohol level over the legal limit of .08 percent.

That same year, 781 people died in drunk-driving-related crashes in

December alone. During Decembers from 2012-2016, the NHTSA reports 28 percent of crash fatalities — 3,995 people — involved a drunk driver.

Roberts urged folks who go out to drink to be aware of how alcohol affects the brain and plan accordingly. Often police encounter someone who does not plan on drinking, he said, but after a few decides to drive home. The effects of alcohol are not immediate and people think they are fine, he said, when alcohol is actually compromising their judgment and reaction time.

"Make arrangements for someone to pick you up," Roberts said, "or have a designated driver."

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