



**Press Statement by Dr. Allan Bachan, Chairman of the EMA
EMA Updates the Public on Oil Spill Action**

17/1/14

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) wishes to update the public on its ongoing response to the oil spills that have affected La Brea and its environs. Preliminary reports suggest that the impact resulted from four Petrotrin oil spills namely spills at the Number 10 and Number 15 lines at Pointe a Pierre, and Riser Platforms 5 and 17. A total of 12 sites have been impacted, these include: Petrotrin's Point a Pierre facility on December 17th; beaches located at: Station, Carat Shed, Pt. Sable and Coffee on December 18th; and Fullerton (most southerly beach), Bonasse, Granville, Bellview, Unity, John Williams Bay, and Point Coco on December 19th.

On Wednesday January 15, 2014 the EMA met with officials from Petrotrin to discuss the status of the clean-up exercise and to clarify issues arising from the reports. The EMA also provided guidelines on cleanup activities to relevant personnel and reports that it is satisfied with the progress of cleanup carried out by Petrotrin to date.

The EMA also wishes to inform the public that approximately 10.5 miles of beach have been impacted as a result of this oil spill, of which approximately 10 miles have been cleaned to date. The majority of the outstanding clean-up is at the River Neg area and clean up there is ongoing. Based on data supplied to the EMA, preliminary reports suggest that 7,500 barrels of oil have been spilled. To date approximately 4,200 barrels have been collected. Reports further suggest that the remainder of the oil either evaporated, or was treated out at sea and dispersed.

The EMA's Compliance and Enforcement team has since been vigilantly monitoring cleanup activities on all sites and we have maintained a daily presence at Carrat Shed, Coffee, Pt. Sable and Station beaches. We wish to report the status of cleanup operations at this time as per the following:

- Fullerton, Bonasse, Granville, Bellview, Unity, John Williams Bay, Carrat Shed, Coffee and Point Coco: shorelines have been significantly cleaned with most of the contaminated debris removed. The remediation and rehabilitation phases will soon be initiated.
- Station: significant clean up of beach, with remnants of oil accumulating along the Northern and Southern ends of the beach. The EMA has made recommendations for further cleanup work at this beach.
- Pt. Sable: Most heavy oil removed with significant residue present along the beach. The edges of River Neg, which runs perpendicular from the beach, still requires attention. The cleanup work continues along this beach with efforts most concentrated at this site. Access to the area is limited during high tides, as the softened surface inhibits the free movement of heavy equipment accessing the Northern end of the beach.
- Mangroves – The mangroves are yet to be cleaned at Coffee, Pt Sable, John-Williams beaches and the EMA is still evaluating a plan of action to address this matter.

Our role is to ensure that appropriate clean-up works are carried out in an effort to address the environmental issues of public health and safety, mitigate the impacts and ensure that the area is brought to a level of normalcy in as quick a timeframe as practicable. In light of public health considerations, the EMA has been conducting air quality monitoring of all areas impacted, and the results of this test indicate low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) present in the air. The levels of hydrogen sulphide and carbon monoxide are also at acceptable levels. The EMA notes that residents of Coffee beach have been particularly concerned about the quality of air in that area as their community is closest to the impact of the oil spill. Based on our air quality test results, the EMA confirms that the air in these affected areas is at an acceptable standard and is no longer hazardous or flammable. As such the EMA would like to advise Mr. Errol Lee of Coffee Beach, La Brea, that he can resume cooking his home-cooked meals.

I wish to stress that to deal with incidents of this nature there are different phases to be initiated. The first phase treats with disaster response and the cleanup of the oil spill in the affected sites. As this phase nears completion, upon service of the Notice of Violation and the entering into of the Consent Agreement, the EMA initiated the second phase of activities to allow for assessment which is intended to guide the rehabilitation and remediation work. These however can be medium to long term. This process will allow scientific data to guide the necessary studies and courses of action to be taken. The EMA has also contacted the US Embassy requesting technical expertise from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support independent investigations and provide guidance to the EMA where necessary.

The public was advised yesterday at a Post Cabinet Meeting of the establishment of an independent task force which is viewed as a parallel entity to the EMA. The EMA wishes to state that we support and welcome the establishment of the task force which will provide technical guidance to the EMA in the administration of conditions under the Consent Agreement. We do not view this task force as a parallel entity but as a much needed resource as the technical expertise to guide the process of remediation and rehabilitation which is not resident in the EMA at this time. I will further state that we as a society need to mature to the extent that we can acknowledge our limitations and welcome assistance that will allow us to accomplish our objectives for the greater good of society.

Further in keeping with the signed Consent Agreement and in keeping with Section 25 of the Act there will be the need to: i) continue assessment of the extent and gravity of environmental impacts which will inform the method/s to be employed toward the remediation or restoration of impacted sites; ii) the containment of any wastes (until all spilled hydrocarbon and other waste generated has been collected); and iii) such other appropriate measures as may be necessary to prevent or mitigate adverse effects on human health and the environment. Dr. Bachan stressed that the costs imposed on Petrotrin shall be attributed to assessment, rehabilitation and remediation works directly.

The EMA understands the need to provide information to the public on the treatment of the oil spill, and will act in a timely manner guided by the principles of transparency, accountability and the rule of law. However, the Authority must first allow scientific assessments to prevail which will pave the way for remediation and rehabilitation works including further studies on environmental impacts. As an independent regulatory agency, our assessments may yield legal ramifications which must be dealt with in a sensitive manner. Therefore, in order to avoid compromising our investigations, the Authority must exercise prudence when making information accessible to the public.

To this end, the EMA has noted with concern the anxiety being perpetuated in the public domain by recent baseless and reckless assertions and commentaries in the media about its actions and treatment of information on the oil spill without any supporting data or evidence. The EMA regrets these claims aimed at undermining the work of the Authority, but will nevertheless remain focused on its objectives as it seeks to address the impacts of this unfortunate incident in a timely manner.

END