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Could illnesses be linked to BP oil spill?

By ERIC BESSON

It contains chemicals that are known to be toxic to animals. It was released in copious amounts. It leaves a foam footprint. It is banned in the United Kingdom. And most importantly from BP's perspective, it sank the slick.

It is Corexit, and more than 1.8 million gallons of the chemical dispersant were used to combat the estimated 150 million gallons of oil that gushed from the Macondo Prospect well after the fatal Deepwater Horizon explosion.

Nalco Holding Company, a Naperville, Ill., chemical company that typically focuses on treating and processing water that comes with the production of crude oil, manufactures the oil slick dispersant.

As a stand-alone chemical, its purpose is to break down the volume of crude oil patches into "discrete droplets" that sink beneath the surface and are presented as food for the oft-hailed microbial bacteria to ingest.

Scientists have disputed this and said Corexit has instead laced the oil with toxins that microbes will not eat, dragged and trapped it throughout the Gulf's water columns and inflicted damage to the ecosystem.

In response to the oil spill, BP initially sprayed two versions of Corexit. The first version, Corexit 9527A, was also used in response to the 111-million-gallon Exxon-Valdeez spill in 1989. It contains 2-butoxyethanol, a hazardous substance that "may be toxic to blood, liver, kidneys, central nervous system," according to its material safety data sheet.

Exxon produced Corexit 9527 and introduced it in 1972 as the first "self-mix concentrate" and the first aircraft-applied dispersant, according to "History of Dispersant Development: A Dispersant Timeline," penned by an investigating officer and pollution investigator with the Coast Guard and published in 2005.

The Deepwater Horizon Joint Information Center (JIC) did not respond to an e-mailed list of questions asking for the date each version of the dispersant was stopped, whether or not there is any chance the dispersant is still being applied in the Gulf and the official total for the amount of Corexit dispersed during the spill response.

The JIC has said in the past that the spraying of Corexit 9500A - the second and reportedly more voluminous dispersant used in the response efforts - was halted on July 19, 2010.

Some of Corexit's critics charge an incestuous relationship between Nalco and big oil companies as a potential reason the dispersant was given exclusive clean-up duties, pointing out that both Exxon and BP have former executives who serve on Nalco's board of directors.

Rodney F. Chase, who was group chief executive and managing director of BP from 1992 to 2003, currently serves as the chairman of Nalco's Audit Committee.

Daniel S. Sanders, who retired in 2004 as president of ExxonMobil Chemical Company, is chairman of Nalco's Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee.

The Environmental Protection Agency presented BP with a list of seven alternative dispersants to Corexit 9500A in May of last year, but the company opted to stay with Corexit.

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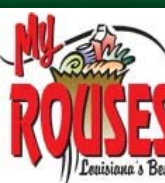


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According to toxicity tests of the eight dispersants on standard Gulf of Mexico test species, the mysid shrimp and silverside fish, none of the dispersants tested - including Corexit 9500 A - "displayed biologically significant endocrine disrupting activity," Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said in her July 15, 2010, testimony before Congress.

The results are available on the EPA website.

Jackson also said in her testimony that response tools on the National Contingency Plan (NCP) Product Schedule are available for deployment by Federal On-Scene Coordinators, who are provided by the Coast Guard.

"If the application of a product is pre-authorized by the [Regional Response Team], then the [Federal On-Scene Coordinator] may decide to use the product in a particular response," Jackson said in the testimony. "If the product application does not have pre-authorization from the RRT, then the FOSC must obtain concurrence from the EPA representative and the representatives of states with jurisdiction over the navigable waters under threat."

Steven Pedigo is the chairman and CEO of Oil Spill Eater International and the inventor of Oil Spill Eater II (OSE II), a product he claims to be a superior cleaning agent that uses bioremediation of oil into CO₂ and water rather than dispersing it.

Pedigo said it is the pre-authorization process that has thus far prevented his product from being applied the spill response. "There are a lot of products on the NCP list; none of them got used on this spill, and the reason is they weren't pre-approved," Pedigo said. "But the federal government would not allow anything to be pre-approved but Exxon's product Corexit."

The EPA administrator defined dispersants as containing "a mixture of chemicals, that, when applied directly to the spilled oil, can break down the oil into smaller drops that can sink below the water's surface," in the transcribed version of her testimony. "Dispersed oil forms a 'plume' or 'cloud' of oil droplets below the water surface, and mixes vertically and horizontally into the water column, and is ideally rapidly diluted. Bacteria and other microscopic organisms are then able to act more quickly than they otherwise would to degrade the oil within the droplets."

Pedigo said the EPA has known for almost 19 years that Corexit's ingredients deter microbial bacteria from "eating" the oil instead of facilitating the process. "They knew in 1992 from testing Exxon did on Inipol, which was basically Corexit with some nutrients in it. They couldn't get it to show any bioremediation at all. So in 1992, they knew that Corexit would not allow for any bioremediation or any digestion of the oil."

Nonetheless, at least 1.8 million gallons of Corexit was utilized in the Gulf of Mexico. Wilma Subra, an environmental scientist who is studying the impact of the Volatile Organic Compounds linked to the MC252 oil on people, said by her calculations that one gallon of Corexit was applied for every 93 gallons of crude, a ratio she considers disproportionate.

She added that coastal residents have continuously called her over the past two to three months to report sightings of ongoing Corexit application.

Subra said she has been in contact with the Environmental Protection Agency concerning the sightings, but she said the EPA contends the last time Corexit was applied was on July 19, 2010, and it has not been sprayed within three miles of the coastline.

"They have no records of it being applied in the coastal areas, but I'm having constant complaints, and I'm turning those complaints over to the EPA," Subra said. "[The EPA] have what they're calling a criminal investigation going, so they can't respond back to me. They can just listen to me."

Subra said she has seen results from tests that provide evidence the dispersant is still being sprayed, but she did not have the clearance to share the results. "I've had people that are doing part of the independent testing test it," she said. "When they tested in the areas where dispersant was reported to have been applied in the coastal areas, they are finding the components of the dispersant in the air."

In hindsight from an environmental standpoint, the use of Corexit may have been the worst-case response scenario. Not only did it impede a more ecologically efficient clean-up process by sinking the oil to the depths of the Gulf; it arguably introduced more hazardous compounds into the large-scale and unprecedented chemistry project.

As reported last week, two Louisiana-based scientists - one a toxicologist and the other a chemist - have conflicting perspectives on whether or not the MC252 that reportedly rests in mass quantities on the seafloor contains volatiles in an amount that poses a threat to coastal residents.

LuAnn White, the toxicologist and consultant to the Louisiana Department of Health and



Hospitals, said the compounds evaporate quickly after reaching the weathered oil surfaces.

"These things, when the temperature goes up, they go into a gaseous phase," White said. "When it's cold, or perhaps if some of them are underwater that never got to the surface, maybe [the volatile compounds don't evaporate], but [the compounds] really break down very quickly in the environment. If you have a jar of gasoline and you put it on your back steps or something, it's gone within a very short period of time because it evaporates out, and that's what's happening to the solvents that are in the oil.

"As we look at the oil spill as a whole, the volatiles really evaporated offshore, so when we start looking at effects on people, we can't trace an exposure source from that oil itself. When people got to that oil that got to shore, that was that thicker, gooier mousse or the tarballs and those analysis, which are up on the EPA website, are not detecting any volatiles in that type of oil that got in."

Subra, an environmental scientist and chemist, said the test results she has examined consistently provides evidence that the oil is to blame for an increasingly sick population.

"What we're finding is elevated levels of ethylbenzene, xylene and hexane and these are the same chemicals that are associated with the BP crude and that we're finding in air samples in areas where residual or new oil is washing on shore," Subra said. "The health impacts associated with these chemicals correspond to the health impacts that the people are experiencing."

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade is a non-profit organization that examines pollution levels throughout the state. LABB conducted 954 surveys from July 26 to Oct. 1, 2010, in four coastal parishes and said 48 percent of the survey group reported an increase in at least one unusual symptom after the oil spill in a report it released last week.

The most common symptoms were cough (261), sinus irritation (258), headache (248), and eye irritation (221).

"We organized this survey with Tulane University, following an objective survey process to find out if there actually were problems," said Anne Rolfe, the organization's founding director. "We found some problems, so the next frontier is to use this data to achieve something."

The entire report is available on the organization's website, www.labucketbrigade.org

Following the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the EPA launched a watchdog initiative to monitor and sample the air quality along the Gulf coast and has yet to report findings of significant airborne VOCs that can be linked to the MC252 oil.

Based on the data posted to its website, the process appears inconsistent and lacks the depth that would provide evidence that the air quality is or isn't tainted in some coastal communities.

The EPA has not posted any results from air samples taken from the five Navarre Beach, Fla. locations it has monitored. The air monitoring test results in the same areas have been scarce and in abbreviated durations in the five locations.

In the federal agency's Navarre Beach monitoring tests for Volatile Organic Compounds, conducted in each of the five locations for time periods ranging from 4 to 14 hours, the EPA posted ND, indicating no data for each location. The tests occurred on June 18, July 4, July 25 (two locations) and Aug. 4, 2010.

Last week, the Tri-Parish Times reported that Paul Doomm, a previously healthy 22-year-old Navarre Beach resident, was suffering headaches, dizziness, minimal mobility and feeling in the left side of his body and multiple seizures on a daily basis. Doomm and his family have struggled to find adequate treatment for his symptoms and believe they originated from his swimming in open waters at Navarre Beach months after the Deepwater Horizon Incident.

Doomm had his blood drawn by Dr. Rodney Soto, a Florida neurologist, and analyzed by Metamatrix Clinical Laboratory in Duluth, Ga. The analysis, which Doomm said was hemodiluted from fluids passed into his system through an IV, found that Doomm had ethylbenzene and m-, p-xylene - VOCs linked to the MC252 oil - in excess of the NHANES 95th percentile.

The report also showed that Doomm's hexane level - another VOC - was off the charts. No national reference point for hexane exists, but Doomm's level, which is higher than 200 parts per billion, exceeded the 95th percentile of Metamatrix's patient sample database.

Doomm's blood contained 106.5 ppb of 3-methylpentane, a compound that is linked to the degeneration of nerve fibers and what Doomm believes is the cause of his seizures.

The EPA tested for particulate matter in three of the Navarre Beach locations, with the tests lasting

2, 3 and 7 hours. In order to get an accurate Air Quality Index reading for particulate matter, according to the federal agency, the tests should last a minimum of 18 hours.

By contrast, the EPA took air samples from a single Grand Isle location on eight consecutive days in August. Per the results posted on the agency's website, the VOC levels for benzene, ethylbenzene, o-xylene and toluene were well below human toxicity levels.

At the same Grand Isle location, the EPA monitored the air every day from Aug. 4 to Aug. 20 for at least 19 hours per day, trying to detect VOCs. The highest VOC daily average was 2.38 parts per million (ppm) on Aug. 19, 2010.

The horror stories are existent, despite the lack of substantiation in some cases. A man identified as Captain Louis told David Gibbons in an international radio interview, posted on davidgibbons.org on Feb. 25, that he was sprayed with dispersant on more than one occasion.

"We've been sick with flu-like symptoms since last September," Louis told Gibbons. "We swam off the coast of Grand Isle before Labor Day because they told us everything was safe. My little girls were in the water...It's hard to pinpoint. I'm not a medical person by no means, but my stomach, for instance right now, I'm in knots and pain. They don't know what's wrong.

"I've been on antibiotics. I haven't had my blood work done except for the regular work-up because I wasn't aware of the contaminants that could be in my body from swimming in the water, much less being sprayed directly with Corexit when the C-130 flew overhead at night. That happened to us twice."

Louis is a third generation commercial and recreational fisherman in Louisiana. He said he worked with the Vessels of Opportunity after the spill, and his family - including his two daughters, 3 and 2 years old - are suffering from symptoms they believe are linked to the oil spill.

However, one suspicion was confirmed and provides evidence that the chemicals linger beyond their release.

As reported by FloridaOilSpillLaw.com, a family from Homosassa, Fla., located on the state's east coast about 60 miles north of Tampa, took a water sample from their pool's filter on Aug. 17, 2010, almost three months after BP stopped spraying Corexit 9527 and one month after it stopped spraying Corexit 9500.

The sample, reviewed by Alabama chemist Bob Naman, contained 50.3 ppm of the Corexit 9527A ingredient and hazardous substance 2-butoxyethanol.

The family's mother, Barbara Schebler told a reporter the family had heard "low-flying aircrafts, including helicopters" above the family's home and figured they were helping in Gulf in the aftermath of the oil spill. She also said the prevailing winds are easterly, which could be what pushed the airborne dispersant over their house and into the pool.

Schebler said her husband twice swam in the pool after mowing the lawn and both times, he experienced "severe diarrhea and very dark urine. This lasted about two days." Schebler told the reporter the problems first began during early May when she and her husband had dermal rashes.

"[2-butoxyethanol] shouldn't be anywhere," Naman, the Alabama chemist and owner of ACT Laboratory, told the Tri-Parish Times. "It's a toxic substance that should not be in water, it shouldn't be in soil and it shouldn't be in people's pools. That particular person (Mr. Schebler), that guy was terribly, terribly ill - bleeding from everywhere, peeing brown, he's got kidney trouble and liver trouble. I don't know if he's going to stay alive much longer, but he did find out what the problem was and it was because he was swimming in his pool."

An analytical chemist with 30 years of experience, Naman also expressed an extremely pessimistic viewpoint on the Gulf's future, offering an unprompted prediction that air quality will sharply decline, beaches will eventually be closed to everyone besides clean-up vessels and martial law will be granted.

Naman said that by now 2-butoxyethanol no longer remains in the environment, and Gulf residents and clean-up workers have to deal with the byproducts of the chemistry project.

"A mix of oil/dispersant/water resulted which is heavier than water and sinks to the gulf floor," Naman said in a follow-up e-mail. "The mixture has resulted in [Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH)] compounds and petroleum/dispersant remnants as well as degradation byproducts of the mixture.

"These 'blobs' will eventually come ashore with southern winds and if a hurricane comes our way...when it does the entire gulf seashore will be inundated with tarry mats and will heavily contaminated beaches and will impact air quality to a degree never seen. Biodegradation is going

very slow because this goop is toxic and microbes dont like it. (sic)"

Due to inadequate funding, Naman's company ACT Laboratory has not conducted many independent tests. He said he has tested the Gulf's water columns and not found PAHs, but he has found oysters "full of oil," and is currently testing royal red, white and brown shrimp with results due back within the week.

Personally, Naman has tested for companies and individuals like the Scheblers, but he revealed neither the companies nor nature of the testing, citing confidentiality.

Rodney Soto, the Florida neurologist who has been drawing blood from people who claim to be sick with spill-related illness to have it analyzed for volatile compounds, appeared on David Gibbon's radio interview with Capt. Louis. Soto said the health issues would only worsen if the status quo were maintained.

"We're not only talking about hundreds of thousands of people that are already having symptoms, but we could potentially be seeing the tip of the iceberg here and we're talking about entire population in the Gulf Coast states and maybe spreading further into the United States," Soto said.

It is a non-toxic bio-remediation product, not a dispersant. It has sat on the shelf, waiting to be utilized. It causes oil to float. It is the first oil spill response tool for 30 countries and the only oil spill response tool for 20 countries. And most importantly from coastal residents' perspectives, it facilitates bacteria ingestion of crude oil.

It is Oil Spill Eater II (OSE II). Steven Pedigo invented OSE II, an environmentally-friendly alternative that he claims causes oil to float to the surface, where it is broken down into CO2 and water, which kick-starts bacterial consumption.

As a testament to its safety, Pedigo said his employees regularly wash their hands with the product while applying it; he added that it has even been ingested in small amounts and shown no adverse affects.

"What you have with my product, you have a product that you can drink, you can wash your hands in it, so it won't hurt the responders or any of the people on the coast or anything that get accidentally sprayed or anything," Pedigo said. "The EPA has performed numerous toxicity tests. Our toxicity values are generally 5,000 or greater. Compare that to 2 for Corexit. The higher the number, the less toxicity. We had numerous efficacy tests, so everyone knows we substantially remediate oil to CO2 and water. We cause oil to float, which protects the water column and the seabed."

Pedigo said OSE II has been used on more than 16,000 spills since it was introduced in 1989, including work on other BP-induced incidents.

"If you go on our website (www.osei.us) and go under photos, you will see where OSE-II was used in Trinidad and Tobago on a well blowout by BP, and we cleaned it up," Pedigo said. "We were then subsequently used on an additional spill by BP on the island of Crete on their refinery.

"You have the EPA, the people who have basically stopped every thing, they have tactical experience in the successful clean-up with the [OSE II]. You have a product that all five branches of the U.S. military has used for 21 years."

Several elected officials, including Louisiana state Sen. A.G. Crowe and Mississippi state Senator Tommy Gollott, have requested the use of OSE II. Gov. Bobby Jindal scheduled a demonstration on the Chandeleur Island chain last May, only to have it thwarted at the last minute by EPA officials.

Crowe, R-Slidell, mailed a letter to President Barack Obama last month criticizing the continued use of Corexit despite early protests, requesting answers for a series of questions and advocating the use of OSE II.

"The United States government should never have allowed Corexit to be used in the Gulf," Crowe said via e-mail. "But we learned early on that it was BP in charge, not the government.

"I am calling for a full-blown congressional investigation which may be the only way to determine if someone in the government was paid off and since my constituents and I have not heard a single word from the president relative to the critically important answers to the scientifically researched questions presented in my letter dated Jan. 16, 2011. I will not stop until we get truthful answers!"

So why hasn't the OSE II been used in the spill response? It's on the EPA's National Contingency Plan, but it wasn't granted pre-authorization. Therefore, it has to be vetted through a Regional Response Team, and as a part of that process, it must secure unanimous consent from the team's members before it can be used.

The response teams are co-chaired by a regional EPA and Coast Guard representative. Also on the team are representatives from federal agencies like NOAA, the Department of the Interior and states with jurisdiction over the navigable waters in question.

"While the list of individuals expressing interest in OSE II to be applied is impressive, the common misconception that prevails is that the response is a democracy," reads an e-mail sent from BP's BioChem Strike Team Leader - Deepwater Horizon addressed to Pedigo. "It is not. It is a command system with a single unified federal on-scene commander, by law. The [Federal On-Scene Coordinator] uses the regional trustees to vet the proposed options for the response on behalf of the FOSC. If ONE trustee denies the use of an option, for whatever reason, then that is what the FOSC will do. There is no vote or majority rule. The exact analogy is that it is a military COMMAND. (sic)"

Pedigo has conceded that BP has been receptive to testing OSE II, and he instead has directed his anger towards the EPA, which he accused of throwing up multiple nonsensical roadblocks.

Pedigo sent a cease and desist letter to the EPA and NOAA, accusing the agencies of defaming his product with incompetent statements. Among the complaints: EPA's RRT IV co-chair originally told the Coast Guard OSE II was not on the NCP list, delayed experiments with the product on oiled marsh because of fears it would cause the oil to sink deeper into the sediment and said the product can't be used because it contains surfactants.

In his letter, Pedigo reiterated that examinations have proven it causes the oil to float and surfactants - which decrease a liquid's surface tension - are included in both Corexit formulations, something that he contends the RRT should already know.

The Corexit competitor said the dispersant has been used for 21 years because it satisfies two strategies oil companies employ during a spill, reducing costs and limiting liability.

"[Oil companies] spray the [Corexit] dispersant to sink the oil. Four or five weeks later, it starts coming up on the shoreline," Pedigo said. "They can't attribute where the spill came from, so the public gets to clean up the spill on the shorelines. Do you know why they can't attribute to where it came from? 2-butoxyethanol in the dispersant erases the fingerprint of the oil."

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson had not responded to an interview request as of press time.

Next week ...

Tri-Parish Times writer Eric Besson examines the threshold used to determine if Gulf seafood is safe for the public's

consumption.

Latest update: Mar 10, 2011 - 05:50:56 am PST

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Comments

Goddess of The Sea wrote on Mar 13, 2011 5:53 AM:

" Thank you Silent Spring for being a hero for America and sharing the truth. Every American christian and jew with a birth certificate for America needs to learn and share the truth without exception.

I'd also like to mention that the oil spill has 100 correlations to Cadillac Desert by Marc Reisner a book on 100 years of fraudulent schemes in nature. Climax under FDR, also Mulholland but really the entire book.

Then One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez with the cursed city Macondo surrounded by circus mirrors once metaphoric Columbia's fall is now metaphoric conquering America. The Macondo well in the Gulf was named after this book. The book is about King Solomon secretly leading the invasion on Macondo to exterminate the christians and jews. Death by God, the Good death, the rise of the rest ...ISLAM

The oil spill occurred Earth Day week which is founded by Gaylord Nelson who was into galactic synchronization, MAYA 2012. The book OHYOS also goes over the galactic synchronization and orange discs across the sky and I can prove it a hundred different ways that its connected to the well also.

Please write these things down somewhere because who knows where the next tsunami will hit intended to wipe America christians and jews off the face of the earth one disaster after another. Actually Islams trying to take over 5 continents using SCALAR and HAARP Etc Hopefully someone will reach the masses around the world with the truth one day. I could go on forever here but theres not enough room.

All this before DECEMBER 2012 "


Silent-Spring wrote on Mar 11, 2011 1:43 PM:
" Correction of error in the name. It was Matt Simmons, not Matt Smith. "

Silent-Spring wrote on Mar 11, 2011 7:28 AM:
" A prominent oil industry insider named Matt Smith spoke out in May 2010, saying the entire southeast U.S. needed to be evacuated. Do a Google. You will find out how quickly he died in his bathtub. "

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