

News Release

For Immediate Release

Outcome of April 2020 Fuel Spill at Maani Ulujuk Ilinniarvik High School in Rankin Inlet

Rankin Inlet, Nunavut (October 20, 2022) – The Government of Nunavut (GN) has concluded its investigation into an April 17, 2020 fuel spill at Maani Ulujuk Ilinniarvik (MUI) High School in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. As a result of the investigation, the Department of Community and Government Services (CGS) is committed to making improvements to prevent a future spill.

In April 2020, a GN sub-contractor did not complete a contract during the installation of a fuel system at the MUI before an automated fuel transfer component could be installed. This resulted in CGS staff having to manually transfer diesel fuel from one tank to another using a pump and valve.

Operator error resulted in fuel tank overflowing from April 16, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. until the spill was discovered by MUI staff the next morning, April 17, at 9:20 a.m. CGS was notified and arrived promptly to correct the issue. Fuel overflow ran through a drain in the floor into the municipal utilidor system.

CGS notified the authorities, including the hamlet, fire department, Department of Environment, and the Minister of Environment by at 1:00 p.m. on April 17, 2020.

Fuel and wastewater passed through Johnston Cove lift station (JCLS) as well as the Wastewater Treatment Plant which discharged into Prairie/Hudson Bay. The department attempted to recover some of the diesel from Johnson Cove Lift Station, but the discharge was complete.

CGS estimates that 18,400 litres of fuel discharged into the bay. CGS worked cooperatively with authorities to remediate the spill within the building and assess and monitor the spill in the bay. Options were limited due to thick ice cover and strong tide.

How is the environment impacted?

A spill of 18,400 litres of fuel is significant. One litre of diesel can contaminate between 100,000 and 1 million litres of water. Harm can occur through direct contact with exposure to contaminated water, sediment, or food. Toxic components in diesel can result in death, impaired growth, and reproductive/behavioural changes.

Cold temperatures slow evaporation and the decomposition of petroleum. The Arctic ecosystem is at increased risk due to lower diversity of plant and animal species. Country food is an important part of the lives of Kangiqliniqmiut, including arctic char, and bearded and ringed seals. A study in the Antarctic found that petroleum components were detected in wildlife a month after a spill.

What's being done to make sure this doesn't happen again?

- 1. Improvement: To prevent reoccurrence, a new dual-line closed fuel system has been installed to prevent tank overflow.
- 2. Improvement: Operator error was mitigated by installing a pump timer for manual transfers. The timer shuts the pump off, preventing manual overflow.
- 3. Improvement: The tank-filling procedure has been updated to require a second employee to log the fuel-tank activity has been completed.
- 4. Improvement: Regulated fuel systems are required to have emergency plans, including risk assessment of all spill pathways. CGS has improved its emergency plan and is now compliant with closed fuel system requirements.

Individuals can contact CGS Communications (<u>CGSComms@gov.nu.ca</u>) with any questions regarding this spill and the steps being taken for prevention.

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