

5/19/10

Texas Tech on the forefront of Gulf oil spill cleanup

Posted: May 19, 2010 4:57 PM CDT

LUBBOCK, TX (KCBD) - Oil continues to flow in the Gulf of Mexico at the rate of thousands of barrels a day. Now the concern is it will reach the loop current, bringing it toward the southern tip of Florida and not the Atlantic.

There are serious questions about how much is really flowing out of that broken riser at the bottom of the Gulf. BP says that number is 5,000 barrels a day. Skeptics say that number could be much greater, reaching as much or more than 70,000 barrels.

Even after they cap the oil leak, they still have the daunting task of cleaning up the devastating oil spill.

The Texas Tech Institute of Environmental and Human Health thinks they may have the answer to the challenging cleanup. They have created the Fibertect Wipe. It's a non-woven cotton material with carbon in the middle.

They originally made the wipes for the U.S. Military to clean up chemical warfare overseas, but now they think this can help with the war on the oil spill here at home. On Wednesday, First Line Technology, based out of D.C., recommended the product for the cleanup.

The cotton can hold 20 times its weight in oil, and the carbon locks in harmful toxins from the oil to decontaminate it. "The current applications in the gulf with the oil spill cleanup are not nearly as aggressive as this Fibertect technology, says Dr. Ron Kendall, Director of the TTU Institute of Environmental and Human Health.

Texas Tech has research teams stationed along the Gulf Coast right now, and they think it won't be long before Fibertect Wipes are used on the front lines of the oil spill problem, including wild life cleanup.

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