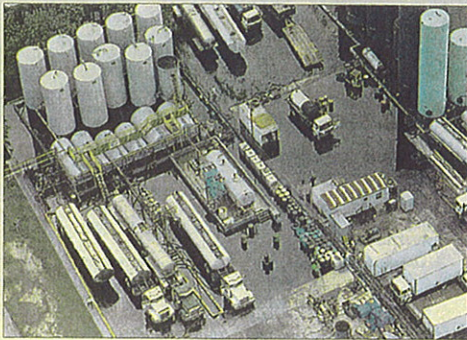


40,000-gallon oil spill investigated



On Monday morning, workers at Perma-Fix waste management company in Davie used a small bulldozer and a backhoe to scoop muck after an oil spill. They worked into the night, pumping the oil back into storage tanks.

Staff photo by LOU TOMAN

Davie plant fears sabotage after tankers are damaged

By JODIE NEEDLE
and MICHAEL CABBAGE
Staff Writers

DAVIE — Police and environmental regulators are investigating whether sabotage caused about 40,000 gallons of oil to spill on Monday at a waste management company.

About 10,000 gallons of used motor oil — enough to fill a small swimming pool — seeped into the ground at the Perma-Fix Environmental Services site on Southwest 47th Avenue at Oakes Road in Davie. Environmental officials do not expect the spill to cause any health problems.

Valves on two tanker trucks

and at least five of the site's dozen tanks were damaged, said Chris Blanton, Perma-Fix's general manager. Several windows also were broken at the 2.53-acre site, across the street from the New Town Commerce Centre industrial park.

Officials from the state's Department of Environmental Protection said Davie police have begun a criminal investigation to determine whether the site was vandalized. But police spokesman Capt. John George said he would not comment until a decision was made on whether his department or one of three environ-

PLEASE SEE OIL /4B

FROM PAGE 1B

Davie waste plant fears sabotage led to oil spill

mental protection agencies would head the investigation.

The site, which is inspected several times daily, has no alarm or security system, a situation environmental officials said was not unusual.

About 5:15 a.m. Monday, Blanton awoke to a call from Perma-Fix's operations manager, Shawn Lennon, alerting him to the spill.

"I thought it was a wake-up call, actually, but then he said we'd been sabotaged," Blanton said.

Several people who saw the tanks said the damage was extensive.

"It looks like someone took a sledgehammer or something on those valves," said Steve Krivdo, a marine science technician with the U.S. Coast Guard, which regulates the company's trucks.

On Monday morning, workers used a small bulldozer and a backhoe to scoop the muck, but their tires spun through the black puddles and muddy grass. The

smell of oil hung in the air late Monday, as employees worked into the night, pumping the oil back into storage tanks and excavating the contaminated soil.

Company and government workers are trying to figure out exactly how much oil was spilled from the site, which can hold about 60,000 gallons. Not all of the tanks were at capacity.

Officials estimate about 40,000 gallons were released. Most was stopped by the site's secondary containment system, a concrete basin that waste management companies are required to have.

Damage to the environment was not very serious, said Kevin Berger, of Broward County's Department of Natural Resource Protection.

"There has been minimal environmental impact at this time, and I don't anticipate any long-term effect," Berger said.

Blanton estimated that damage to the company would be between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

Catherine Porthouse, a specialist with the state DEP, said most of the discharge, which is not flammable, seems to be sitting in the top 2 feet of soil.

She said the company is lucky that South Florida has had a lot of

rain recently.

"They've got a couple things going for them. They're helping to float the oil and the monitoring wells on t-

erty are showing ground contamination," Porthouse said.

By law, if state and federal environmental agencies had cleanup, Perma-Fix will pay for the cost, officials said.

"A lot depends on the of the spill and what is in the immediate vicinity," said

Mintz, an environmental professor at nearby Nova Southeastern University and an expert on hazardous waste management. "Oil is a toxic substance, but normally it's not a problem."

Porthouse said the federal Environmental Protection Agency is sending a coordinator to Atlanta office to oversee cleanup.

According to Porthouse, Perma-Fix's environmental record was good. The site has been licensed by the county since 1987.

"They're a very good company," Porthouse said. "We haven't had any problems with the site in the past."