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## Investigation of damage to rammed tank ship on Mississippi River suspended by poor visibility, Coast Guard says

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Investigation of the extent of damage below the water line to the **816-foot tank ship Bravo** was suspended Tuesday afternoon due to poor visibility, a day after the ship was hit as it was unloading crude oil at the Ergon-St. James oil terminal on the **Mississippi River** near Convent, the U.S. Coast Guard said Tuesday (Apr. 7).

The Bravo remains pinned to the docking facility at the terminal by several tugs. It was hit during its unloading operation by **the bulk carrier Privocean**, which broke from its moorings Monday afternoon.

The lower part of the Bravo was also being inspected with side-scan sonar for any signs of damage, said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Carlos Vega, as officials try to determine whether the ship can be removed from the river for repairs.

At 5 p.m. Tuesday, the Coast Guard also announced that a 45-foot response boat and its crew from Coast Guard Station New Orleans was conducting a shoreline assessment, beginning at mile marker 96, just north of the Crescent City Connection in New Orleans.

"No reports of recoverable product have been received by the shoreline assessment teams, nor have any facilities on the lower Mississippi River reported pollution," said a news release.

A 10:15 a.m. Tuesday Coast Guard overflight of 85 miles of the Mississippi, from five miles above the Convent site of the collision to Braithwaite in Plaquemines Parish, found no sheen or recoverable oil, other than at the site of the collision, the news release said.

Jonathan Henderson, an official with the Gulf Restoration Network environmental group, filed a report with the Coast Guard's National Response Center on Tuesday that said oil was on the batture adjacent to the Ergon-St. James loading area near Convent and in adjacent water. Henderson said oil and sheen also were visible in the river.

The Bravo was offloading crude oil at the time of the collision, and Coast Guard officials estimated that 420 gallons of oil discharged into the river and another 126 gallons of oil were spilled on the Bravo's deck.

An initial inspection determined none of the ship's cargo tanks were breached, but an estimated four ballast tanks sustained damage. Ballast tanks hold liquids that keep a ship floating level.

The Ergon facility was shut-in and boomed off, and Coast Guard officials have classified damage to the structure as a major marine casualty.

Vega said two pollution response teams are at the scene conducting an investigation, but there's no indication of a further release of oil from the ship. He said the oil that was in the river "seems to have dissipated."

The accident occurred Monday when the river was at 25.8 feet just upriver at Donaldsonville, about a foot below flood stage.

The Privocean also is being inspected for seaworthiness, Vega said. Before hitting the Bravo, the Privocean also collided with the 98-foot towing vessel Texas, which was moored at the time.

Vega said four Texas crew members were taken to a local hospital with minor injuries. He did not have information on their status on Tuesday.

The Texas had begun to take on water and pushed up on the river bank immediately after the accident. The vessel is now headed for a Bollinger Shipyards facility for repairs, he said.

The Coast Guard reopened a 3-mile segment of the river between mile marker 163 and 160 to one-way ship traffic at 10 p.m. Monday, Coast Guard officials said.

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