

THE BATTALION

Vol. 72 No. 181
8 Pages

Wednesday, August 8, 1979
College Station, Texas

USPS 045 360
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Weather

Partly cloudy and mild with a high in the mid 90's and a low in the low 80's. Winds will be southerly at 5-10 m.p.h. 50 percent of thundershowers today, 20 percent this afternoon & tomorrow.

Mexican oil lands on Padre beaches

United Press International
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas — Thousands of sticky tar balls from an oil well that blew out two months ago and 500 miles away Tuesday washed onto Texas' most famous beaches, threatening the state's multi-million dollar fishing and tourist industries.

As tar made landfall on the South Texas coast, the Coast Guard stretched oil containment booms across inlets in hopes of keeping it out of environmentally delicate areas. There were reports, however, that some oil was suspended 40 feet below the surface and could flow under the booms.

The closest slick of major size, estimated at 12-square miles, was drifting 55 miles off the coast east of Corpus Christi, about 160 miles north of the mouth of the Rio Grande.

Slicks can be tracked all the way back to Mexico's Ixtoc I well, 500 miles to the south, that blew out June 3 and continues to bubble up thousands of gallons of oil per day. Officials for government-owned Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) say it will be autumn before efforts to halt the oil flow by drilling a relief well can be completed.

Dick Whittington of the Texas Department of Water Resources said he expected oil would continue to roll up on Texas beaches at least until next spring.

"It's taken two months to get here," he said. "If they shut it off now it would take two months for the tail end of it to reach this far."

Some state officials toured the beaches Tuesday to survey the damage.

"There's no question we have a very se-

rious situation and are going to continue to have one until sometime next spring," Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby said after an aerial tour of the coast.

He said the financial impact of the pollution on the state's fishing and tourist industries could run into losses of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard was trying to protect as much of the coast as it could.

"We have begun cleanup operations on the beaches impacted by tar balls," said Coast Guard spokesman Roger Meacham. "We will continue that until it is cleaned up."

Meacham described the tar balls as the ultimate product of petroleum subjected to water, currents and the weather during a journey of more than 500 miles.

He said protecting the entrances to the ecologically sensitive Laguna Madre — the bay between Padre Island and the mainland — was the Coast Guard's "primary environmental concern."

The Coast Guard deployed containment booms across the entrances to the Laguna Madre Monday. No oil was reported on the booms Tuesday and no tarballs were known to have reached the bay where shrimp and other sea life could be destroyed.

"It will kill us for next year if it gets in the bays," said Carl Bidos, a Brownsville, Texas, shrimpman. "If it gets on the beaches it won't bother the fishing industry."

Bidos said the shrimp boats working the Gulf for 14 to 20 day periods also would be unable to sell their catches if the shrimp came in contact with a slick.

Texas considers suit against Mexico

United Press International
AUSTIN — Texas attorneys Tuesday were researching prospects for a multi-billion-dollar damage suit against Mexico over the massive oil slick threatening public beaches along the Gulf of Mexico.

"We don't feel it's fair for the citizens of Texas to pick up this cost," said John Fainter, first assistant attorney general. "We're going to do everything that we can see that they don't."

"We're essentially in the process of researching what courses of action we have open to us as the state of Texas," Fainter said. "We want to know whether it is covered by a treaty or United Nations compact."

Fainter said no estimates are available of the cost of the clean-up operations that will be necessary or the damage the oil slick will do to Texas beaches and coastal waterways.

"It looks like we're going to have substantial damage," Fainter said.

Texas has a \$1 million oilspill clean-up fund, but officials of the Department of Water Resources have indicated the cost could go far higher than that amount.

Texas could use hydropower

Energy source studied at A&M

Although water is a precious commodity in Texas, some experts say it could be used to generate power cleaner and cheaper than other natural resources.

It may seem ironic that a state dotted with oil wells should be looking underground for another means of generating power, but experts point out petroleum and its by-products are becoming less abundant and more expensive.

Texas A&M researcher Dr. David Basco and others say the state should start looking at hydropower — or hydro-electric power as energy produced by the force of moving water was called in earlier days — as a potential source of power.

"Water flows across Texas, and if we can put turbines in the flow we can get power," Basco told a recent conference.

"I think everyone recognizes it will not

solve all of our problems, but whatever is there should be developed to contribute to a future energy mix," he said, noting North America has developed only 45 percent of its hydroelectric potential compared with Europe's 80 percent.

Dr. Jack Runkles, director of the Texas Water Resources Institute at Texas A&M, contends hydropower is a non-polluting, non-consumptive energy source that can be developed with already available technology.

And once a generating plant is installed, he said, maintenance and operation costs are minimal compared with other types of energy generation.

A recent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report indicated there are at least 460 sites in Texas with some hydropower potential, with more than 230 of them located on existing dams.

Runkles said nearly all the potential sites come under the "low-head" classification because the state does not have an abundant supply of water or natural sites for tall dams.

Low-head means power would have to be generated by dropping water from relatively low dams and passing it through hydraulic turbines especially designed for smaller flows and a lower drop, with water falling only 10-50 feet.

"Low-head sites will not solve the energy problems of Texas," Runkles admitted, "but they may, however, produce a considerable amount of environmentally acceptable, economically competitive energy."

Runkles said he envisions low-head sites as including "backyard" systems capturing the energy of a small creek, a small system on a sizable dam, or a low-head, run-of-river system to benefit a small community or industry.

Irrigation canals, he said, are another important source that could be developed for pumping water to sprinkler systems.

Runkles said it would take about two years to design and license a low-head project, with about another two to three years for construction. That compares, he said, with nine years of lead time for a coal-fired plant or 12 to 14 years for a nuclear facility.

Strategy to offset inflation to begin

United Press International
CHICAGO — The AFL-CIO Executive Council called on the administration Tuesday to begin job-creating programs to offset a recession and renewed its call for mandatory wage-price controls.

The action came one day after the federation released its initial report on price monitoring by about 10,000 volunteers. The report showed prices for most items — including fuel, utilities and shelter — have increased since April.

In a policy statement on the national economy, the 35-member council criticized the current, voluntary, wage-price guidelines, which the administration is in the process of revising.

"The loophole-ridden, flexible, price and profit guidelines are in stark contrast to the wage controls imposed on workers and enforced by employers subject to extralegal governmental pressures," the council said.

It said a "comprehensive, mandatory, legislatively based anti-inflation controls program would be more effective and fair."

The council said the government should begin work immediately on job-creating

programs, quick-start public works, energy conservation and development.

"Nothing will be gained by inaction and delay," the council said. "Recession will not cure the problems of inflation and energy."

The measure, a compromise fashioned by Lane Kirkland, the federation's secretary-treasurer and heir apparent to ailing President George Meany, called for work to begin immediately on a SALT III treaty for reduction in the number of warheads by the United States and Soviet Union, but at the same time accepted development and deployment capability of the MX intercontinental ballistic missile.

Last February, Kirkland had called the SALT II treaty "a colossal failure on arms control" and said it could result in the biggest arms build-up in history, but apparently has changed his mind since then.

On Monday, Kirkland, who holds the No. 2 post of secretary-treasurer, presided in Meany's absence. He told reporters later he would run for president if Meany retires.

"If nominated, I will run," Kirkland said. "If elected, I will serve."

Meany is recuperating from a three-month illness that has caused deterioration of an arthritic right hip.

There has been increasing speculation Meany will not seek re-election in November to another two-year term as head of the 13.6 million-member federation.

Kirkland said Meany is "well on the way to recovery" and expects to be back in his office by the end of the week.

"What his plans are, he will declare in his own good time," Kirkland said. "His body and his legs are not what he leads with it is his mind."

On other matters, Kirkland said the AFL-CIO will wait until after next year's Democratic and Republican conventions before deciding what candidate, if any, to support in the 1980 presidential election.

The council adopted a policy statement generally supporting Carter's energy program developed in the Camp David talks, but opposed decontrol of crude oil prices. It said a windfall profits tax should be passed regardless of decontrol.

Although Kirkland said the AFL-CIO is awaiting revisions in the administration's wage-price guideline plan before commenting, he left open the possibility of support of the measures.

"I would never say never," he said.



Riding high

Two construction workers get a five-story high ride atop the wrecking ball of a massive crane being used in construction of the Academic & Agency Building. The workers, linking steel girders into the fourth floor framework of the new building, use the crane as a quick shortcut to the ground.

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.



Frisbee ballet

John Smith, a junior in Ocean Engineering, free-styles a frisbee on the Main Drill Field. The Disc Association of A&M practices there Sunday and Wednesday afternoons at 6 p.m., and they welcome all interested people to join them.

Battalion photo by Michael Clough

Technology agent to assist Bryan and three other cities in southern states

By LOUIE ARTHUR
Battalion Staff

Help is on the way to the city of Bryan. Gary Holland is a technology agent who visits local governments in south central United States to provide technical assistance to small cities and will visit Bryan Aug. 17.

Holland is one of seven agents participating in the new Community Technology Initiatives Program (CTIP) managed by Public Technology, Inc. of Washington, D.C.

In Bryan, Holland will meet with City Manager Ernest Clark to look over various problems of the city and help find the solutions. They will look over written problem statements and set priorities, Holland said in a telephone interview from Stillwater, Okla.

"Then I will begin to search for technology that has been developed in that area and make it available to the city manager," he said. "How much of an advisory capacity I serve depends on the expertise of the city officials."

Holland defines the job of a technology agent: "I try to provide innovative technological information to various departments within city governments by developing a network of information exchange between the Cooperative Extension Service, the federal laboratory consortium and private enterprise."

Some of the general issues Holland and Clark will discuss concern the city police, fire department, community development and land use. Holland mentioned a few specific problems such as control of underground fires at sanitary landfills and standardization of fire equipment.

Holland said they will "have to be realistic" with national problems like energy that affect Bryan.

"We can't try on our own to find the solution to the energy problem — not on that broad of a scope," he said. "We try to find more realistic answers, such as vehicle fleet maintenance."

Holland said he tries to help the city run more effectively by learning where technology exists that can help them. Also, he can find out what the major problems are in small cities (with populations of 50,000 and under) and encourage federal labs to focus on those problems that are widespread.

These services provided by Holland and CTIP are free for the 32 participating cities. Public Technology, Inc., who manages the program, is a non-profit organization funded by grants from the National Science Foundation.

Holland will be serving Clayton, Mo. and Ottawa, Kan., in addition to his duties in Bryan. His home base will be Stillwater, Okla.

"This is my first visit to Bryan," Holland said. "It's sort of a 'get acquainted' trip. After this we'll be working by phone and mail a lot but we hope to meet on a regular basis."