

Oh, what a feeling



Photo by Sondra N. Robbins

Junior general studies major Tom Niehaus checks out the engine of a 1991 Camaro Z-28 on display behind the Academic Building Wednesday to promote the TAMU Sports Car Club.

Spill team will help firms clean-up oil

WASHINGTON (AP) — The oil industry will place a 10-member spill response team in Galveston and equipment in Corpus Christi, congressional aides were told Wednesday.

Oil companies have formed the non-profit Marine Spill Response Corp. to help shipping firms clean up oil spills.

The company scheduled a news conference Thursday to formally announce the locations of its response centers. Congressional staffs were briefed Wednesday.

Two large centers will be placed on the East and West coasts and one will be placed in Lake Charles, La., to serve the Gulf of Mexico.

In about 30 months, the MSRC centers will have enough equipment to clean up a spill the size of the one caused by the Exxon Valdez in Alaska last year, the aides were told.

The five large centers each will be served by four to six smaller centers, like those in Galveston and Corpus Christi. The Lake Charles center also will be served by some in Venice, La., and Mobile, Ala.

The MSRC is spending \$69 million on response centers in the Gulf, the site of several oil spills in recent months.

In June, a Norwegian supertanker spilled 3.9 million gallons of light crude 57 miles off the Galveston coast. On July 28, a Greek tanker and two barges collided and dumped 700,000 gallons of heavy crude into the Houston Ship Channel. There have been smaller spills in the Houston area this year, too.

"Establishing two anti-spill depots in Texas is a tremendous step forward in moving to control accidents like we've seen in the Houston Ship Channel this year and are certainly likely to see in the future," said Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas.

Ten people will staff the response center in Galveston and will have booms, skimmers, a ship and other equipment. The MSRC will store more equipment in Corpus Christi.

The Lake Charles center will have 64 employees, officials said.

The MSRC is designed to assist, not replace, clean up efforts of the Coast Guard and local crews. A comprehensive oil spill bill President Bush signed last month creates regional teams and a national oil spill response center within the Coast Guard.

The oil industry, waiting until Bush's approval to finish work on the MSRC because of liability provisions in the law.

Quayle defends NASA, encourages staff

HOUSTON (AP) — Vice President Dan Quayle defended the nation's space program Wednesday, saying problems experienced recently by NASA are the results of taking risks and working on the cutting edge of technology.

Quayle, speaking to workers at the Johnson Space Center in an address that also was beamed nationwide to agency employees on the NASA television network, reaffirmed the Bush administration's commitment to space exploration and putting Americans on Mars.

"Recently, we've heard criticism about problems," said Quayle, who serves as chairman of the National Space Council.

"With problems like these, people ask, 'Can NASA do the job?'" he said. "My answer is simple: You bet NASA can do the job! To our critics, I just say: 'Just watch and see.' Take it from a guy who knows a lot about unwarranted criticism."

Flanked by models of the shuttle, the space station and a large robot, he praised NASA engineers for dealing with the troubles of the Hubble Space Telescope and for re-establishing communications with the Magellan space probe, which is near Venus.

"That business you're in — the cutting edge of progress," he said. "Yes, there are some risks and problems that no one could have anticipated. But NASA ingenuity will solve those problems."

"So hold your heads high," he told the workers. "You have chosen the right career. Your work is important."

Quayle also lashed out at congressional attempts to trim the budget allocation for NASA, calling it the work of "doubters ... who believe man's destiny is anchored to a single planet."

"Notwithstanding our critics, we shall succeed in America's quest for American pre-eminence in space," he said.

Quayle said such efforts also amounted to abandoning the legacy of former Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

"George Bush and Dan Quayle are not going to abandon that legacy," he said. "We're not going to allow doubters to abandon that legacy either."

But he added that the space program was in transition and that such transitions were not always easy.

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