

News Release  
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U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security  
United States  
Coast Guard



## Florida Keys tar balls not linked to Deepwater Horizon oil spill

KEY WEST, Fla. - The Coast Guard Marine Safety Laboratory in New London, Conn. analyzed a sampling of tar balls discovered on Florida Keys shoreline Tuesday and determined that none of the collected samples are from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

A sampling of tar balls discovered on beaches at Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, Fla., Smathers Beach in Key West, Big Pine Key, Fla., and Loggerhead Key in the Dry Tortugas National Park, Fla. were flown by a Coast Guard HU-25 Falcon jet based in Miami, Fla., to New London, Conn. Tuesday for testing and analysis.

The results of those tests conclusively show that the tar balls collected from Florida Keys beaches do not match the type of oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The source of the tar balls remains unknown at this time.

Capt. Pat DeQuattro, commanding officer of Sector Key West, authorized the use of the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund Tuesday to commence cleanups of any oil pollution on Florida Keys shoreline and established a Unified Command comprised of members from the Coast Guard, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the Interior, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Monroe County to manage the Florida Keys Tar Ball Incident response.

"The conclusion that these tar balls are not from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill incident in no way diminishes the need to continue to aggressively identify and clean up tar ball-contaminated areas in the Florida Keys," DeQuattro said. "We will continue to operate as a Unified Command and utilize funding through the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund until we have successfully identified any additional tar balls on the shoreline and completed cleanup efforts."

Coast Guard pollution investigators from Sector Key West responded to a report of twenty tar balls found on the beach at Fort Zachary Taylor State Park in Key West Monday. Coast Guard Sector Key West received notification from the Florida Park Service around 5:15 p.m. Monday of twenty tar balls ranging in size from approximately three to eight inches in diameter. Park rangers conducted a shoreline survey of Fort Zachary Taylor and the adjacent Navy beach at Truman Annex and recovered the tar balls at a rate of nearly three tar balls an hour throughout the day, with the heaviest concentration found at high tide, around 12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Coast Guard Sector Key West received notification from the National Response Center at approximately 8 a.m. of tar balls on the beach in Big Pine Key, followed by a 9 a.m. report of tar balls on Loggerhead Key in the Dry Tortugas National Park. The report of tar balls on Smathers Beach came via telephone to watchstanders at Sector Key West at approximately 8:20 a.m.

The public is asked to report the sighting of any tar balls to the U.S. Coast Guard at 1 (800) 424-8802. Any oiled shorelines can be reported to 1 (866) 448-5816.

The public is reminded that tar balls are a hazardous material, which while not dangerous to most people can cause an allergic reaction and should only be retrieved by trained personnel. All beaches on the Florida Keys remain open.

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