

# Questions & Answers

## Gasoline Fuel Spill in Sanikiluaq – July 22, 2024

**Q: PSA specifies 5000 litres of gasoline were spilled. How was this amount calculated and how accurate is this number?**

*Initial estimates of the gasoline fuel spill that occurred on July 22, 2024, were reported as 5000 litres based on information known to our Department of Community and Government Services' Petroleum Products Division (PPD) division, which is responsible for operations. Unfortunately, unreliable information regarding the spill was widely circulated by unofficial sources. The number reported by others appears to have been based on estimated capacity of the fuel tank itself, and not the actual fuel spill, which is why those numbers are exaggerated and inaccurate. Following the assessment of Nunatta Environmental, on July 23 at 1 p.m., the total volume spilled has been updated to 4,800 litres.*

**Q: How did this fuel spill occur? What caused this?**

*The fuel spill was caused by human error where a valve between the main tank and a smaller tank was left open during resupply. The small tank, once filled, overflowed. As soon as the spill was detected, the valve was closed, stopping any further fuel loss.*

**Q: Is the fuel spill contained?**

*Yes, the fuel spill was contained on the same day, July 22, 2024, and within the tank farm berm. Absorbents were deployed, and no free product remains. Tank farms are specifically designed for the purpose of reducing risk to the environment and the surrounding community, designed precisely for this type of situation.*

**Q: Why were Sanikiluaq residents evacuated?**

*The Government of Nunavut (GN) officials were not included in the decision-making process nor were they part of any communication that led the municipality to advise residents regarding community evacuation.*

*The GN provided access to the local school as a temporary location for residents to occupy in the event fumes from the spill were causing discomfort in their homes. However, readings taken by representatives from the Department of Environment shortly after the spill event occurred determined that there were no fumes present in the surrounding area outside of the spill site.*

**Q: How long did the evacuation last?**

*Government of Nunavut officials engaged with the hamlet throughout the day to provide safety information regarding the fuel spill event. Communications were consistent, emphasizing that the risk to the community was minimal.*

*Following the arrival of the Nunatta Environmental on site at 5 p.m. on July 22, 2024, it was determined that no free product was present, and the combination of strong winds and sun led to rapid fuel evaporation. Hamlet officials confirmed that residents were advised the safety risks were minimal, and that those who had left the area could safely return home.*

**Q: Why did the Government of Nunavut's response to the fuel spill take as long as it did?**

*The PPD division was notified of the fuel spill at approximately 1 p.m. on July 22, 2024. The cause was identified and stopped, minimizing further risk of loss and harm to the community. Immediately after notification, mitigation and remediation plans were activated. Environmental specialists were on the ground within 4 hours of notice being provided to the department.*

*Within the community, officials with the Department of Environment visited the spill site and confirmed the proper application of absorbent materials according to protocol. Additionally, they activated the Photoionization device (PID) to verify that no fumes were present in the surrounding area outside of the spill site.*

*Subject matter experts assessed the risk to the community as minimal and communicated this to the municipality.*

**Q: Are there concerns for safety of Sanikiluaq residents?**

*The local Conservation Officer has measured the fuel vapours and found no detectable vapours outside the immediate spill area. This means that the spill is considered to have low risk to health.*

**Q: What remediation has been done and what actions will be taken to ensure for the safety of Sanikiluaq residents?**

*Product that has been captured in the absorbents has been placed in quatrex bags and drums. Waste products remain at the site in open bags to allow for evaporation. Following the arrival of the Nunatta Environmental to the site at 5 p.m. hrs on July 22, 2024, no free product was present, and the combination of strong winds and sun prompted rapid fuel evaporation, after which residents were advised that safety risks were minimal, and they returned to their homes.*

**Q: What will be done to prevent fuel leaks like this one in the future?**

*Protocols are in place to ensure safety in PPD operations. Training and education continue to remain a priority to reduce the risk of human error in operations.*

**Q: What do residents need to be aware of in case of a fuel spill?**

*In the event of a fuel spill, individuals are asked to advise the appropriate officials within the Department of Environment using the 24-hour call line: 867-920-8130.*

*The Government of Nunavut remains the number one source of reliable information regarding spill response and emergency measures.*

**Q: Was a state of emergency issued yesterday stemming from the fuel spill?**

*Sanikiluaq Hamlet Council did not pass a motion to declare a local state of emergency, as required by the Hamlets Act. Additionally, no request for assistance was received from the community by the GN.*

*Despite this, hamlet senior officials independently determined that the fuel spill warranted community evacuation and engaged the local RCMP detachment members through the fire department to support this decision.*

**Q: What risks have been identified for the public?**

*Hazards around the fuel spill site were determined to be low. The dissipation of fumes is rapid through evaporation. PPD's environmental contractor Nunatta Environmental, further assessed the spill and determined the risk to be low in all areas. The spilled fuel remains well within the confines of the berm of the tank farm with minimal risk of escape into the community or water sources. By all accounts, residents and the community of Sanikiluaq are safe.*