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Regulators Warned Company on Pipeline Corrosion

By EMMA GRAVES FITZSIMMONS

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. — The company responsible for a massive [oil spill](#) here was warned in January by federal regulators about insufficient monitoring of corrosion on the pipeline that federal officials say leaked more than one million gallons of oil into a major waterway this week.

The owner of the pipeline, [Enbridge Energy Partners](#), received several citations from federal regulators in recent years before the warning in January. Company officials said they had routinely tested the pipeline for corrosion.

“There was annual maintenance on 6B this year as with all of our pipelines,” Patrick Daniel, the company’s chief executive, said Thursday, referring to the pipeline that leaked oil into the Kalamazoo River.

Federal officials said the estimated amount of oil that spilled from the pipeline into the river on Monday was more than a million gallons, significantly more than the company’s estimate of about 800,000 gallons. The leak was in a 30-inch pipeline that carries millions of gallons of oil each day from Griffith, Ind., to Sarnia, Ontario.

Mr. Daniel said the company used internal inspection tools to determine the levels of corrosion or cracking on all pipelines. There had not been any repairs or replacements made to the part of the pipe where the spill took place, he said.

State officials here have expressed grave concern over the environmental impact if the spill

reaches Lake Michigan, more than 60 miles away. Officials for the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), which is leading the response efforts, said Thursday that they were confident that they could prevent that from happening.

Ralph Dollhopf, a federal coordinator for the agency, said efforts by response workers had so far stopped the oil from entering Morrow Lake, about 30 miles downstream from the site of the spill.

“We do not anticipate that Lake Michigan is at risk,” he said at a news conference.

Still, officials said it could take months to clean up the spill, which was believed to be among the largest ever in the Midwest. Hundreds of response workers continued on Thursday to lay boom, skim the water and conduct flyovers to assess the damage.

Gov. [Jennifer M. Granholm](#) had expressed concern on Wednesday that the oil might reach Lake Michigan if containment efforts were not strengthened. Some state officials dispute the claim that oil has not reached Morrow Lake, saying they saw oil sheen there during a flyover.

The cause of the leak was being investigated. The pipeline remained closed and cannot be reopened without approval from federal regulators.

Local emergency officials said Thursday that they would evacuate 30 more families from homes near the spill site because of health risks. They also asked residents of about 100 homes along the river to use bottled water as a precautionary measure while they tested local water sources.

Wildlife officials said that they had opened a rehabilitation center for animals and that Canada geese, swans and turtles had already been rescued.

Mr. Daniel, the chief executive of Enbridge, apologized again on Thursday, saying the company took full responsibility for the spill. “We will spend whatever it takes to clean it up,” he told reporters. “We have more than enough available for that.”