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BP

# Oil estimate raised to 35,000-60,000 barrels a day

June 15, 2010 | By the CNN Wire Staff

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Government scientists Tuesday increased the estimate of oil flowing into the Gulf of Mexico to between 35,000 and 60,000 barrels per day, up to 50 percent more than previously estimated. That translates into 1.5 million gallons to 2.5 million gallons per day.

The government's previous estimate, issued last week, was 20,000 to 40,000 barrels per day.

The change was "based on updated information and scientific assessments," and was reached by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and Chair of the National Incident Command's Flow Rate Technical Group Marcia McNutt, the Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center said.

"The improved estimate is based on more and better data that is now available and that helps increase the scientific confidence in the accuracy of the estimate," it said.

Alberto Alisedo, a member of the flow rate technical group, said scientists reached the consensus after a three-hour conference call on Monday and a 10-hour meeting on Sunday of the group in Seattle, Washington.

"Our response to the spill is not determined by flow rate estimates," said BP spokesman Toby Odone. "Our primary concern is to capture as much oil as possible. We are building options to contain higher volumes of oil."

He called measurement of the flow rate "extremely challenging," given the fact that the leak is a mile below the surface of the water.

Tuesday night, President Obama used his first Oval Office address to the nation to say 90 percent of the oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico will be captured within weeks.

"Already, this oil spill is the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced. And unlike an earthquake or a hurricane, it's not a single event that does its damage in a matter of minutes or days," the president told the nation. "The millions of gallons of oil that have spilled into the Gulf of Mexico are more like an epidemic, one that we will be fighting for months and even years."

In an attempt to counter complaints of a sluggish government response to the oil disaster, Obama noted cited resources have poured into the region including nearly 30,000 people working in four states to contain and clean up the oil.

"From the very beginning of this crisis, the federal government has been in charge of the largest environmental cleanup effort in our nation's history, an effort led by Adm. Thad Allen, who has almost 40 years of experience responding to disasters," Obama said.

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