

## Coast Guard: 'very little' chance of oil on local shores

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There is "very, very little" chance of oil from the Deepwater Horizon disaster hitting the west coast of Florida now that the well is capped, a top Coast Guard commander told environmental experts in Sarasota Wednesday.

"At branch St. Petersburg we're at a very low threat level," said Cmdr. David Burns, a reserve officer brought in 45 days ago to coordinate the oil spill response for 13 west coast counties.

Despite the rosy outlook, Burns told an audience at the Hyatt Regency Sarasota for the Florida Local Environmental Resource Agencies' annual conference that oil planning continues in the region, although he expects the local response to scale back soon.

The Coast Guard called up 40 reservists who are conducting oil reconnaissance flights and emergency planning from St. Petersburg.

The reservists have 15 days left on their tour of duty. Burns said he is not sure if more reservists will be called up when the current group goes home.

Burns traveled to Sarasota with state officials to finalize the county's oil response plan. Emergency planners chose the Sarasota County Fairgrounds as a staging ground for oil clean up crews and identified boat ramps that can be used for deploying skimming vessels.

But Jamie Arleo, an emergency response expert with the state Department of Environmental Protection who helped with Sarasota's plan and attended Wednesday's conference, said the oil plans are now more likely to come in handy during future spills, "although hopefully we don't have any."



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