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Olympic Pipe Line Spills over 25,000 Gallons of Gasoline into Bulson Creek in Rural Skagit County, WA

The spill is the largest for Olympic Pipe Line and the third-largest hazardous liquid spill in Washington State since the 1999 Bellingham Tragedy that claimed the lives of three boys after a quarter million gallons of gasoline ignited in Whatcom Creek.

BELLINGHAM, Washington [Dec. 12, 2023] – On Sunday Dec. 10, a large gasoline leak from the Olympic Pipe Line was discovered east of Conway, WA. The most recent estimate puts the spill at 25,000 gallons or greater. The spill impacted important wildlife habitat as the gasoline leaked directly into Bulson Creek, an [area restored](#) in the last decade to improve fish habitat. The incident caused the closure of Conway Elementary School while crews worked to cleanup the spilled gasoline and investigators sought to determine a cause of the incident.

Investigators have now said they believe the source of the leak was a failed connection in small tubing that ran from the pipeline to a pressure transmitter located in a vault connected to the Olympic Pipe Line. A pressure transmitter is a device that measures the pipeline's pressure and converts it into a signal that is transmitted to the operator's control room. Vaults are used along the pipeline to house and protect the pipeline's sensors and parts of its valves.

"We keep hearing that this was a small tube failure, which begs the question: Just how long was it leaking for?" Pipeline Safety Trust Communications Director Kenneth Clarkson said. "Over 25,000 gallons of gasoline is a lot of gasoline to leak through a small tube which first had to fill a large vault before it continued to leak out of containment," Clarkson said.

Both state and federal agencies are on-site and working with Olympic Pipe Line and its parent company BP to assess the leak and remediate the spill. Although cleanup efforts are still underway, and road and school closures persist, it has been reported that the pipeline's tubing has been repaired and the pipeline is being prepared to start back up.

Pipeline Safety Trust was born out of the [1999 tragedy](#) in Bellingham, WA caused by the Olympic Pipe Line when it spilled a quarter million gallons of gasoline into Whatcom Creek that ultimately ignited and killed three boys.

According to data from the federal pipeline regulator, U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) this is the largest incident on Olympic Pipe Line since the 1999 Bellingham Tragedy. And, PHMSA data shows the spill is the third largest hazardous liquid spill in the entire state of Washington since the Tragedy, with the only larger spills being a Tidewater Inc. spill in Pasco that spilled 37,800 gallons of gasoline and a Trans Mountain spill in Bellingham that leaked 27,090 gallons of crude oil, both spills occurred in 2000.

"To see another spill of this magnitude from this specific pipeline is more-than extremely disheartening," Clarkson said. "This time we are fortunate that nobody was injured or killed. However, any spill, and especially one that happens near our schools and into our treasured waterways and salmon habitat is completely unacceptable."

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About Pipeline Safety Trust: The Pipeline Safety Trust is a nonprofit public watchdog promoting pipeline safety through education and advocacy by increasing access to information, and by building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government and industry, that result in safer communities and a healthier environment.