

Gasoline leak stopped before lake fouled

By Brian McGinn



Officials from the Point Pleasant Beach Fire Department and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection were on hand at the Lake of the Lilies in Point Pleasant Beach over the weekend trying prevent gasoline that leaked from an underground tank on Route 35 from contaminating the lake.

Photo courtesy Candace Donoghue

POINT PLEASANT BEACH — Several agencies worked together here early Saturday morning to contain a spill from an abandoned gasoline tank at the former Surf R.V. & Auto Center on Route 35 south before the fuel contaminated a nearby lake.

Officials from the Point Pleasant Beach Fire Department were dispatched to 1506 Route 35 south at approximately 8 a.m., after receiving several reports of a natural gas leak.

Once on scene, Deputy Fire Chief Vincent Storino determined the odor in the area was not caused by natural gas, but rather, by gasoline. He determined the odor was emanating from a nearby 8-by-8-foot hole on the property containing an old, 1,000-gallon gasoline tank.

The hole had been dug by a private construction company to remove the tank. According to Point Pleasant Beach Fire Department officials, due to the heavy rain on Friday the tank — which was left uncovered — filled with water and ruptured, filling the hole with gasoline-contaminated water.

The property was recently purchased by Jenkinson's South Inc. However, when asked this week, Jenkinson's officials were uncertain if tank's removal was initiated by Jenkinson's or the former owners of the property.

The hole quickly filled and began to overflow, sending the contaminated water into a storm drain on Carter Avenue, according to the local fire department.

Working quickly, Point Pleasant Beach Fire Department members used dirt and absorbent materials to build a dike in an effort prevent more contaminated water from spilling into the storm drain.

Once local firefighters had contained the spill, Deputy Chief Storino contacted the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection [NJDEP] and the Berkeley Township Emergency Response Team — which serves as Ocean County's hazardous material team — to assist with the cleanup.

Members of the Point Pleasant Beach Fire Department were also dispatched to the Lake of the Lilies — in the area of Blodgett and St. Louis avenues— where the affected catch basins drain into the lake.

Fire department officials inspected the area around the lake and determined that no gasoline-contaminated water had entered the lake. As a precaution, local officials put a containment boom near the area where the catch basins meet the lake.

According to fire department officials, several manhole covers in the area were removed to allow any hazardous vapors in the sewer system to escape.

Once the Berkeley Township Emergency Response Team was on the scene, local officials said they assisted in ensuring no gasoline-contaminated water entered the Lake of the Lilies by using several floatable devices at the base of the catch basins.

This week Karen Hersey of the NJDEP said the agency did not receive reports of any of the "free product" spilling into the lake.

She said the NJDEP responded to the scene to oversee the clean-up efforts.

"The cleanup involves the removal of the tank and also the placement and monitoring of the booms in the Lake of the Lilies," Ms. Hersey said.

She said a private company, Hydroscience, was responsible for the removal of the ruptured gas tank and the contaminated water. This work was being done using vacuum trucks and was supervised by the NJDEP.

"All of the free product is out of the drainage system and the tank has been removed," Ms. Hersey said.

She said crews from the NJDEP are still on scene in Point Pleasant Beach, monitoring the booms in the Lake of the Lilies, as a precautionary measure.

Also assisting on the scene were members of the Point Pleasant Beach Police Department and Police Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator Daniel DePolo.