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UNIFIED COMMAND CALLS FOR TARBALL CLEANUP ON BUTTERFLY BEACH

MONTECITO, Calif. – Responders will remove a swath of tarballs found June 25, around 10 a.m. on Butterfly Beach south of Santa Barbara.

Unified Command (UC) consisting of the US Coast Guard, Department of Fish and Game's Office of Spill Prevention and Response, and Pacific Operator's Offshore believe the oil to be consistent with a natural seep from the area. The UC expressed concern for the beach going public and Pacific Operator's Offshore proactively agreed to remove the oil. Cleanup begins tomorrow.

Though the beach remains open, Unified Command asks that the public avoid the area where cleanup crews will be removing the oil.

Tarballs form as oil weathers in the marine environment. Lighter components of the oil evaporate while heavier material in the crude oil remains behind. Some crude oils mix with water to form an emulsion that often looks like chocolate pudding. This emulsion is much thicker and stickier than the original oil. Winds and waves stretch and tear the oil patches into smaller pieces or tarballs. While some tarballs may be as large as pancakes, most are coin-sized. Tarballs are very persistent in the marine environment and can travel hundreds of miles.

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