

Crews continue to clean up after Southington chemical spill



By Alex Ceneviva, WTNH.com Staff and Renee Chmiel, News 8 Reporter

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SOUTHINGTON, Conn. (WTNH)— Crews are still working Thursday to clean up a chemical spill in Southington.

It happened at Light Metals Coloring, a metal finishing company on Spring Street. Crews were there all night long working, some in Hazmat suits.

About 350 gallons of hexavalent chromium leaked into the Quinnipiac River and the surrounding area.

“Generally it’s a long term exposure issue. It can cause acute sudden symptoms of exposure as well – that would be skin irritation, respiratory irritation,” said Jeff Chandler, Supervisor of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Emergency Response Unit.

Long term, hexavalent chromium can also cause cancer. It's also tough to clean up. Officials say a boiler in the Light Metals Coloring building overfilled, and when the pressure released, the chemical spilled. Crews will be removing part of the building's roof, as well as soil from the yard and part of the street.

"It all stayed in the storm system and some of it did get discharged into the Quinnipiac water basin," said Chief Harold Clark of the Southington Fire Department.

Though it's in the river, tests show it's not in the air. Officials will be testing the ground water too. They say this won't impact the drinking water, but some neighbors are concerned.

"This morning I made my coffee with bottled water because I was just a little bit nervous...we're innocent bystanders and now we're impacted," said Matt Noyes, who lives nearby.

For now fire departments, state health and environmental agencies and the coast guard will be working to clean the spill up. They say the mess is contained, except for what's in the river. They still don't know how much of the chemical is in there, so they're urging everyone to be careful.



Map shows portion of Quinnipiac River where residents are asked not to consume fish following hazmat spill. (Courtesy: DEEP)

“We want people to do catch and release only for all aquatic life in the river in this immediate area and basically avoid the river bank,” said Chandler.

Soil samples from the area near the building and from the Quinnipiac River are being tested on Thursday.

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Clean Harbors has also been working to flush the chemical out of the wetlands.
