

Pipeline rupture spills oil into reservoir north of Los Angeles

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GORMAN – A landslide apparently ruptured an oil pipeline Wednesday that spilled up to 126,000 gallons of crude into a reservoir that provides water to Southern California cities, officials said.

Officials said they had cordoned off the affected area of Pyramid Lake and were not concerned about potential contamination of the region's drinking water.

"These kinds of spills are usually pretty localized," said Henry Martinez, chief operating officer for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, which uses water from the reservoir to generate power.

The light crude oil spill occurred about a mile east of the lake, about 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles.

Firefighters closed several lanes of Interstate 5, a major north-south highway, as they rushed to isolate the area and build a dike to keep more oil from pouring into the lake. The Forest Service and state Department of Fish and Game were working with pipeline owner Pacific Energy Partners to control the oil.

Arthur G. Diefenbach, a senior vice president for the company and its subsidiary, Pacific Pipeline Systems, said officials believe the spill was caused by a landslide, but "it's a little early to tell."

Diefenbach said officials were concerned about possible harm to local wildlife. "We have a bird and wildlife rescue unit on standby if we should have a problem," he said.

The 1,297-acre lake stores water for delivery to Los Angeles and other Southern California coastal cities.

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