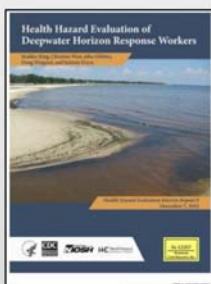


## NIOSH Self-Identifies Significant Limitations of Convenience Survey



than those not exposed. The dispersants used in the response are known to cause upper airway irritation and could have contributed to these symptoms, however because nearly all respondents self-reporting dispersant exposure also reported oil exposure (95%), the effects of dispersants alone cannot be determined from this evaluation. Although volatile components of oil are irritants and can cause upper airway irritation and cough, the extent to which volatiles remained in the oil at the time of exposure reported by survey respondents is unknown. Lower respiratory symptoms have been documented in workers exposed to crude oil during oil spill cleaning operations, although the specific exposures for these symptoms were not identified. In addition to possible chemical exposures from oil cleaning operations are exposure to road and gravel dust at the marina and docks, tobacco smoke (personal smoking and second-hand exposure), upper respiratory infections resulting from crowded work and living conditions, previously existing medical conditions, and symptoms resulting from over-exertion in the heat. The NIOSH survey did not account for these factors. Additionally, these findings from a convenience sample of workers from one response location may not apply to other workers in different locations or performing different duties.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is currently planning a longitudinal study of approximately 20,000 response workers to evaluate health outcomes, including respiratory, neurobehavioral, carcinogenic, immunological, and mental health concerns. Information about this effort can be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/outreach/>. The Institute of Medicine held a workshop in September 2010 to obtain input from experts about the content of this study; an unedited transcript of this meeting can be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/programs/ioss/ohw/10sept09/10sept09-22-10.pdf>.

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