

**Bloomberg Businessweek****Global Economics**<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-03-13/25-years-of-oil-spills>**Twenty-Five Years of Oil Spills**By [Evan Applegate](#) March 13, 2014

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On March 24, 1989, a tired [third mate](#) ran the tanker [Exxon Valdez](#) into a reef near Alaska's [Prince William Sound](#). About 10.5 million gallons of crude oil flooded the waterway in what was then the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history. Although the salmon have returned and most of the spill is gone, stubborn pockets of oil linger at the site even after 25 years and billions of dollars spent on cleanup. The incident spurred tighter international and U.S. regulations and the construction of sturdier, better-staffed ships. While the safety record of oil tankers has vastly improved, it's difficult to prevent outlier events such as the 2010 BP ([BP](#)) spill. Where oil goes, spills follow.

**Key**

Spill from a ship, oil processing facility, storage tank, or other source

10,000 gallons    100,000 gallons    1,000,000 gallons

----- Pipeline    o Major oil port  
 ——— Waterway

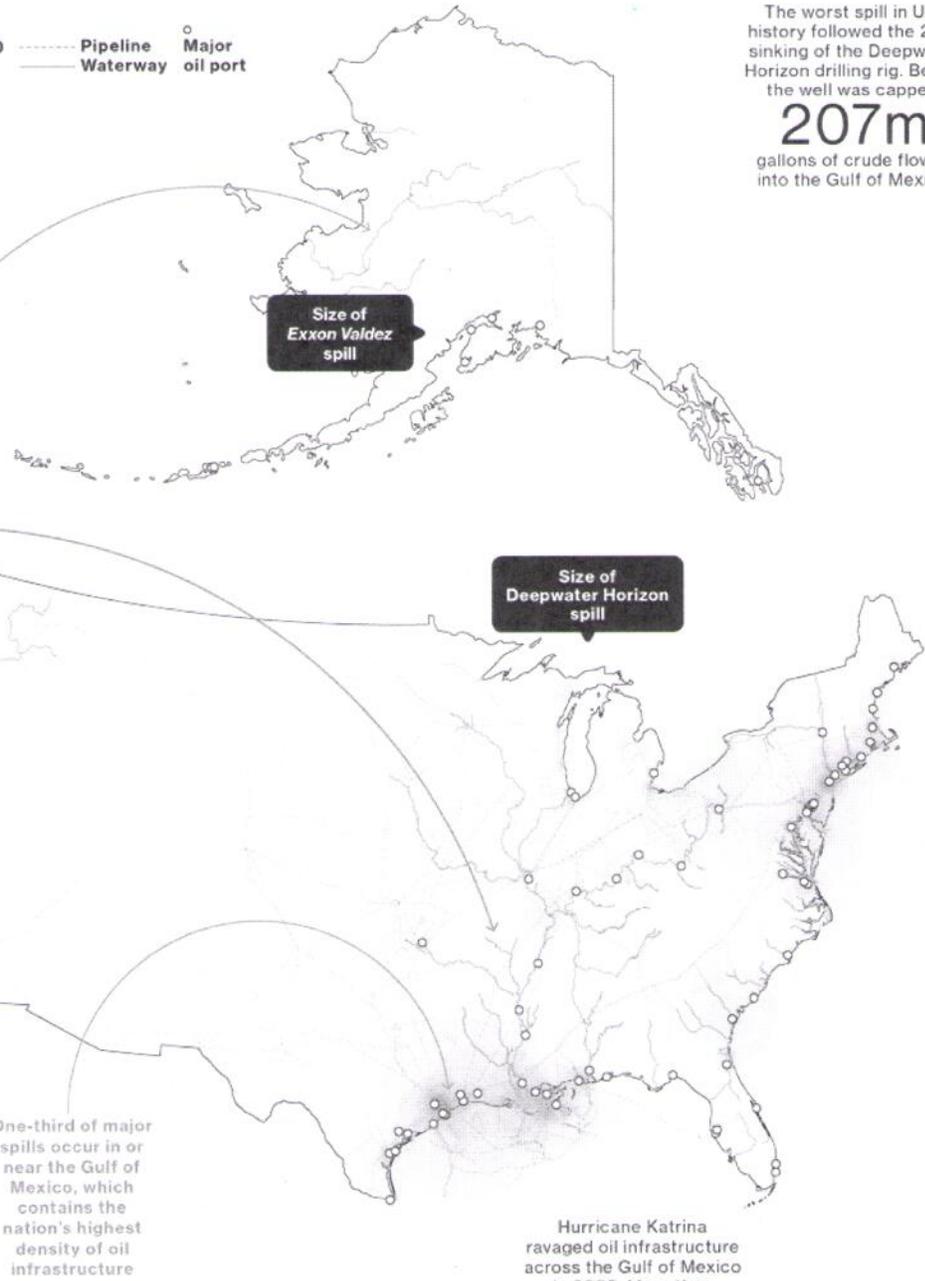
Thousands of workers arrived within weeks to remove the oil, which affected **1,300** miles of remote coastline. Although ExxonMobil fought in state and federal courts to limit its liability, it spent \$2.1 billion on the cleanup and paid \$1 billion in damages.

**1/3** of all waterborne spills take place in rivers and canals, which are heavily trafficked by ships moving oil to refineries and storage tanks.

Spills are clustered at major oil ports, where storage facilities, refineries, tankers, and pipelines link up

One-third of major spills occur in or near the Gulf of Mexico, which contains the nation's highest density of oil infrastructure

The worst spill in U.S. history followed the 2010 sinking of the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig. Before the well was capped, **207m** gallons of crude flowed into the Gulf of Mexico.



**What kind of oil gets spilled?\***



8% Gasoline  
 12% Other/nonpetroleum oils  
 16% Intermediate fuel oils  
 17% Heavy fuel oils, bunker fuel  
 46% Crude

Two-thirds of all oil spilled consists of dense, heavy varieties that can persist for decades

Hurricane Katrina ravaged oil infrastructure across the Gulf of Mexico in 2005. More than

**7.6m** gallons poured out of damaged facilities.

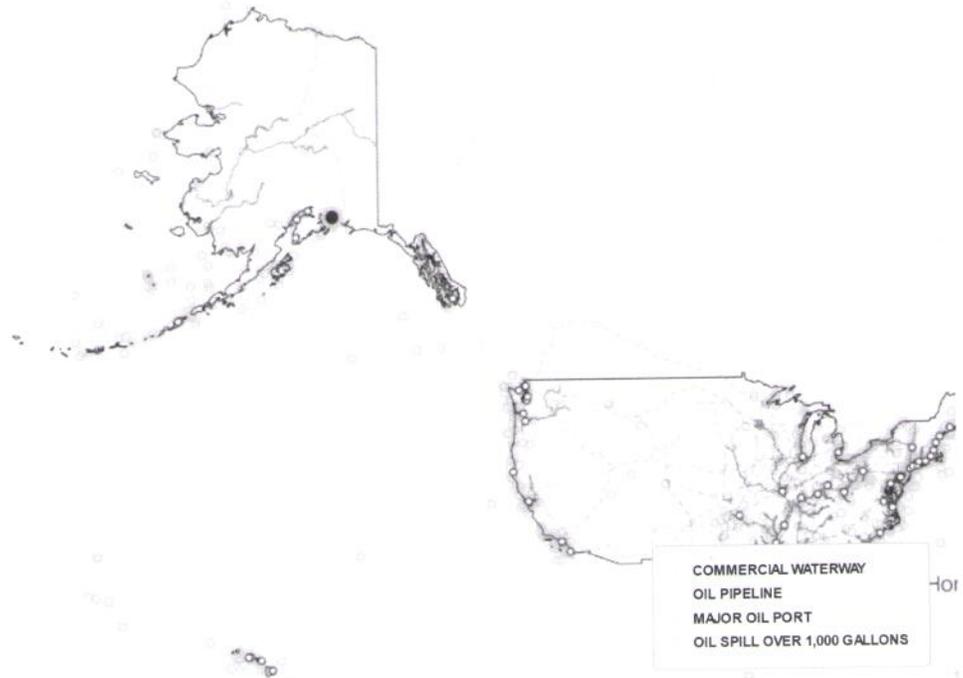
Since 1973, enough oil to fill 692 Olympic-size swimming pools has been emptied into U.S. waters

The **Deepwater Horizon** incident spewed out almost 20 times as much crude as the *Valdez*.

**Who spills oil?**



## Interactive Map: The United States of Spills



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Map shows spills over 1,000 gallons of petroleum products in U.S. waters, 1973 to 2012. Graphic by Bloomberg Businessweek. Data: Energy Information Administration, U.S. Coast Guard Marine Casualty and Pollution Database, International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation

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