

Water Flow from PPL's Martins Creek Ash Basin Greatly Reduced Overnight

PRNewswire
ALLENTOWN, Pa.

All night long, workers from PPL's Martins Creek power plant in Lower Mount Bethel Township, Pa., placed sandbags of varying sizes into an area of an ash basin that has been leaking a water- ash mixture into the Delaware River. They have succeeded in greatly reducing the flow into the river from the leak.

"We have a lot less water going through the discharge pipe this morning, and we will not stop our efforts until we completely stop the leak," said Tom Eppehimer, the power plant's manager.

Thursday evening (8/25), a heavy-lift helicopter that flew to the power plant from Michigan dropped one-ton sandbags into the area of the ash basin where the leak occurred. The helicopter dropped six of the large sandbags until it became too dark to do the work safely.

From darkness on, plant workers took over, manually piling up smaller sandbags to plug the leak.

PPL began using sandbags after earlier efforts to stop the leak using metal bars, wooden timbers and a large metal plate all proved unsuccessful. PPL also is using straw bales and absorbent booms to contain as much of the ash as possible.

PPL estimates that more than 50 million gallons of water has escaped from the ash basin since the leak developed Tuesday night (8/23).

The basin is a lined, water-filled storage area for ash that is created when the plant burns coal to generate electricity. During normal operations, a mixture of water and ash is pumped into the basin. The ash settles to the bottom of the pond, and water from the surface is discharged to the river.

PPL monitors the water in the basin and at the river discharge on an ongoing basis as part of the plant's compliance with its environmental permits.

Since the leak occurred, PPL has conducted much more intensive water monitoring - in privately owned wells around the power plant and in the Delaware River at the discharge pipe and several locations downstream.

"Making sure people have safe drinking water is a top priority as we work to stop the leak," Eppehimer noted. "Results of all of the tests we have taken since Thursday afternoon show that we have not impacted the quality of drinking water. We'll continue to monitor water quality closely."

The main concern is the potential for arsenic contamination. Arsenic is a component of coal ash in minute quantities. Tests from nearby wells have not detected any arsenic.

Tests from an area where the Easton Water Authority draws water from the river have shown arsenic levels well below the government's drinking-water standard of 50 parts per billion of arsenic. These standards are set for protection of the public.

The most recent results were from samples collected about 9 p.m. Thursday. Additional samples were collected through the night.

The leak also caused flooding on some local roads and cornfields that are on PPL property.

"This morning, we will begin cleanup of the areas that were flooded," Eppehimer said. "One of the things we will focus on is cleaning up the roads that were covered with ash. The ash has made the roads extremely slippery, and we want to make sure the roads are safe."

PPL has notified local, county, state and federal officials and agencies. Company officials have been working with numerous government and private- sector organizations and will continue to keep the public informed.

PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL), headquartered in Allentown, Pa., controls about 12,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the United States, sells energy in key U.S. markets and delivers electricity to nearly 5 million customers in Pennsylvania, the United Kingdom and Latin America. More information is available at <http://www.pplweb.com/>.

SOURCE: PPL Corporation

CONTACT: George Lewis, PPL Corporation, +1-610-774-5997, Fax: +1-610-774-5281

Web site: <http://www.pplweb.com/>

<https://news.pplweb.com/news-releases?item=16242>