

Groups wait for the call to help at oil spill

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Burnaby residents may be called on to help in the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Our team is on standby," said Coleen Doucette of the Oiled Wildlife Society of B.C. "I expect we'll get called at some point."

The society is part of the Oiled Wildlife Trust, an umbrella organization that includes the Burnaby-based Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. and the B.C. SPCA.

Doucette said U.S. crews are handling the response so far, but depending on what develops, B.C. residents may be called in as relief workers.

Doucette said the oil is hitting the birds out in the water.

"A lot of them are probably drowning," Doucette said. "They're going to start seeing dead birds soon."

Doucette said oil-covered birds lose their ability to regulate body temperature and try to go ashore to keep warm. But because of winds blowing away from the shore, it's been difficult for oily seabirds to get to land, she explained. Doucette said Canada's most sophisticated, well-trained oil spill wildlife rescuers are in the Lower Mainland, and some Burnaby residents could be called on for extra help. Doucette also said Canada needs tougher laws to force oil companies to clean up after spills. Currently, they are legally required to clean up the environment but not the animals. "It's a total nightmare," she said, adding the Liberals are trying to end a moratorium on offshore drilling in B.C. "It's very scary to think this could happen here." Burnaby resident Sara Dubois is the B.C. SPCA manager of wildlife services and president of the B.C. Oiled Wildlife Society. Dubois said the SPCA has been getting calls from people wanting to help with the spill, but they are redirecting them to www.tristatebird.org, the website for the wildlife rehabilitation group working on the Gulf of Mexico spill. Dubois echoed Doucette's comments opposing offshore drilling in B.C. and called on the public to challenge MPs on the issue of lifting the moratorium. "People need to ask themselves, is this what we want?" The spill started on April 20, when an undersea oil well ruptured following an explosion and fire that killed 11 workers. An estimated 210,000 gallons a day are seeping into the water in what's been dubbed the worst oil spill in U.S. history. BP is leasing the drilling rig from Transocean Ltd. and is responsible for the cleanup. For a list of 10 things you can do to help the spill, see Jennifer Moreau's blog, *Community Conversations*, at www.burnabynow.com.

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