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St. Louis District

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Small barge sinks at Melvin Price Locks and Dam

St. Louis - A small barge that was a support vessel for Dredge Dubuque sank yesterday below the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's Melvin Price Locks and Dam near Alton, Ill. Dredge Dubuque is a small cutter head-type dredge from the Corps of Engineers' St. Paul District. There were no personnel aboard the dredge or barge at the time of the sinking.

Dredge Dubuque arrived at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam Monday, Dec. 15, to winter over inside the land side guide wall area downstream of the locks and dam and was moored there when this happened.

Three work pontoons also broke loose and were recovered by personnel from the Melvin Price facility. These same personnel also removed four floating barrels from the water.

A small quantity of oil created a sheen of about 1500 square feet. It was quickly surrounded with floating absorbent booms available for that purpose by Melvin Price personnel. The U.S. Coast Guard, which along with the EPA and Illinois EPA was called to the scene, estimates that a maximum of 40 gallons of oily material may have entered the water, but it was contained.

The St. Louis District is sending its floating crane Sewell to the site today to support recovery operations. Divers are being dispatched from St. Paul to assess possible damage to the 20 by 60 foot barge and to begin plans to raise it safely. They will be ready to dive as soon as Friday, weather permitting. There is no anticipated environmental damage from the incident.