

There is an exaggerated concern over an accidental oil spill from the transformers on the service platform located in the middle of the wind farm. Ten thousand gallons of mineral oil in each of four transformers will be contained in triple-walled structures to prevent accidental leakage into the ocean. The platform safety equipment will be built to the standards of the National Fire Protection Association and a spill response plan will be in place before construction begins. The platform itself will be built to the American Petroleum Institute (API) standards for offshore platforms that can withstand hurricane winds and high waves.

The Facts

According to the Product Data Sheet¹, transformer oil will not cause:

- “significant hazards for emergency response”
- reproductive or mutagenic effects such as cancer or birth defects.
- significant adverse health effects if swallowed

Furthermore, this product does not contain any components that are considered carcinogenic by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the International Agency for Cancer, or the National Toxicology Program².

A Perspective

Compared to the hazards of the heavy No. 6 residual fuel oil burned at the Canal Plant, mineral oil is far less of a threat to the environment. For example, the 2003 spill of approximately 100,000 gallons of residual oil by the single-hulled Bouchard barge headed for the Canal Plant took its devastating toll on birds and shellfish beds while befouling beaches. The Canal Plant consumes some 330 million gallons a year of residual oil, most of it transported by single-hulled barges. More than 1.5 billion gallons of oil move through the Cape Cod Canal every year³. In the last 30 years over 7 million gallons of residual fuel oil have been spilled in the waters around the Cape and Islands, most of it destined for power plants⁴.

In addition, marinas situated along Nantucket Sound store significant quantities of fuel oil. For example the Hyannis Marina stores almost 40,000 gallons of fuel in underground tanks some of which has been known to spill when refueling boats⁵.

In Conclusion

The electrical service platform, stationed on six sturdy legs is indisputably less likely to spill oil from its triply contained transformers than are the moving, single-hulled barges and tankers traversing our waters delivering oil to fossil fuel power plants. Even in the unlikely event of a leak, the transformer mineral oil is more easily cleaned up and far less environmentally damaging than hazardous residual fuel oil.

1. FINA Product Data Sheet for DIEKAN 400 Transformer Oil.
2. FINA Material Safety Data Sheet for DIEKAN 400 Transformer Oil, p.1, September 25, 2002.
3. “Oil spill fouls Buzzards Bay,” by Amanda Lehmert and Paula Peters, Cape Cod Times, April 29, 2003.
4. Argo Merchant 25 miles off Nantucket with 7.7 million gallons, 1979; Bermuda Star, 7,500 gallons, 1990; Bouchard Barge #120, 98,000 gallons, 2003.
5. “Hyannis Harbor Fouled by Spill,” by K. C. Meyers, Cape Cod Times, December 12, 2004: 2,000 gallons spilled.