

EPA ramps up air quality monitoring for oil spill

May 2 2010, By JOHN FLESHER , AP Environmental Writer

(AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency says it's stepping up air quality monitoring on the Gulf Coast.

There are concerns that vapors from the [oil](#) and controlled fires might cause health problems for people living in the region. An oil smell could cause headaches or nausea, but EPA spokesman Dave Bary said Saturday there have been no confirmed reports of such problems.

State health agencies are advising people having such symptoms to stay indoors and ventilate their homes with air conditioning.

Crude oil gives off gaseous vapors. But Jonathan Ward, an environmental toxicology professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, says the vapors likely will be mostly dispersed by brisk sea breezes by the time they reach shore.

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