

# Oil spill leaves half million Mexicans without water

April 15 2015

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One of the main tributaries to the Santiago River in El Salto, Jalisco State on March 22, 2015

Authorities in southern Mexico scrambled Wednesday to restore potable water to more than half a million people after rivers were contaminated when thieves punctured an oil pipeline.

The city of Villahermosa in Tabasco state closed schools on Wednesday

to protect the health of students following the incident.

Thieves tapped an [oil](#) pipeline operated by state-run energy firm Pemex on Sunday, causing a spill that affected local rivers and forcing the city to shut down four [water](#) filtration plants.

The [city](#) government said operations resumed at two plants on Wednesday and water service would return to normal during the course of the day.

The two other facilities will not open until Friday because cleanup crews must remove more oil near the plants.

The Tabasco state government urged residents to ration water and estimated that it would take another 72 hours to completely clean up the rivers.

Stealing oil has become a lucrative activity among drug cartels, forcing Pemex to stop shipping finished fuel through its pipelines after discovering 3,674 illegal taps last year.

The thefts have caused other environmental disasters in the past and a deadly explosion in December 2010, when an illegal tap caused a blast that killed 29 people in the central town of San Martin Texmelucan.

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