

Ecuador says Galapagos fuel spill 'under control'

December 23 2019



Ecuador authorities had activated emergency protocols when a transport barge sank in a port on San Cristobal Island, spilling 600 gallons of diesel fuel into the water

Ecuador officials announced Sunday that a fuel spill in the Galapagos

Islands, caused when a barge sank carrying 600 gallons of diesel fuel, was "under control."

Authorities had activated emergency protocols earlier Sunday to contain the environmental impact of the spill in the Galapagos archipelago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is home to one of the most fragile ecosystems on the planet.

"The situation is under control, and a series of actions have been deployed to mitigate the possible effects," the presidential communications office said in a statement, adding the response operation had "controlled" the spill.

The accident, in which one person was injured, occurred in a port on San Cristobal Island, the easternmost island in the chain, when a crane collapsed while loading a container holding an [electric generator](#) onto a barge.

The falling container destabilized the ship, which was carrying 600 gallons of diesel fuel, causing it to sink.

The generator and the loading crane were also submerged.

The Emergency Operations Committee (COE) took "immediate action to reduce the environmental risk" in the so-called Enchanted Islands.

Personnel from the Galapagos National Park (GNP), the official nature reserve authority, and the Ecuadorian Navy set up spill containment barriers and oil absorbent cloths around the fuel patch.

Galapagos minister Norman Wray told reporters that work was under way to recover the diesel. He also said the generator, which was intended to supply energy on Isabela Island, and the barge would be replaced "as

soon as possible."

Isabela Island, the largest island, is currently facing energy rationing. Wray assured reporters that food supply levels in the Galapagos would remain normal despite the loss of the barge.

The same barge, which is used to transport fuel and [construction materials](#) to the Galapagos, had sunk previously in February 2018 due to a weight imbalance, in a port on the Guayas River.

The Galapagos Islands, located 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) east of mainland Ecuador, helped English naturalist Charles Darwin develop the theory of evolution.

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