

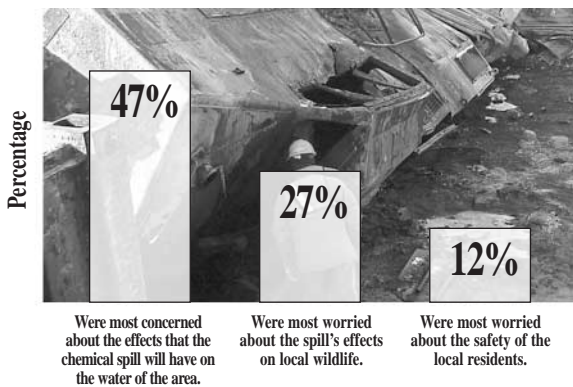
Poll STATION

With Linda Banister



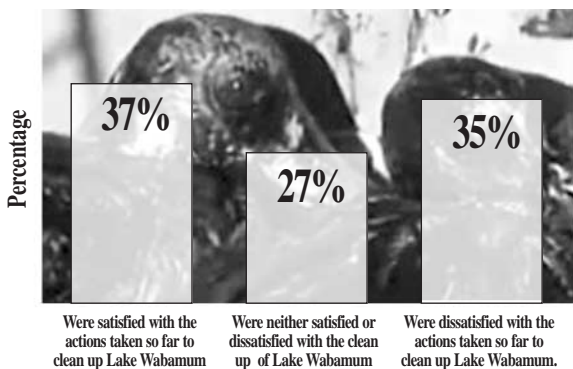
Occurrences of manmade ecological disaster are rare and, when they do happen, we often find ourselves far removed from the situation. However, this summer just such a tragedy struck much closer to home. In the early morning hours of August 3rd, 2005, 43 rail cars derailed near the summer village of Whitewood Sands, spilling what is called Bunker C oil into Wabamun Lake. This month, the *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians about their awareness of the situation in the Wabamun Lake area and what they felt should be done.

WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS REGARDING THE DERAILMENT AT WABAMUN LAKE?



Respondents were first asked if they had heard of the train derailment in the Wabamun Lake area. The vast majority of respondents (94 percent) said they had heard of the derailment, while six percent had not. Of those respondents that had heard of the situation in Wabamun, almost half (47 percent) were most concerned about the effects that the chemical spill will have on the water of the area. Just over a quarter (27 percent) were most worried about the spill's effects on the local wildlife, while 12 percent cited safety of the residents. Six percent of respondents were worried about the situation in general.

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE CLEAN-UP EFFORTS?



When asked, 69 percent of respondents were aware that it was mandatory under Canadian law for the Canadian National Railway Company to take full responsibility for the derailment and ensuing chemical spill that took place. Almost one third (30 percent) of respondents were not aware of this information.

Overall, only 37 percent of respondents were satisfied (4 percent very satisfied and 33 percent satisfied) with the actions taken so far to clean up Wabamun Lake. Twenty-seven percent (27 percent) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 35 percent were dissatisfied with the actions taken so far (22 percent dissatisfied and 13 percent very dissatisfied).

SHOULD COMPANIES BE BETTER PREPARED?

The majority of respondents (71 percent) indicated they were concerned about more incidents such as this one taking place in the future. In contrast, 25 percent were untroubled about any future events like the one in Wabamun. Ten percent of respondents were either unsure (5 percent), or did not think that large-scale industrial companies should have to take such preventive action (5 percent).

The large majority of respondents (90 percent) felt that large scale industrial companies should take preventive actions to avoid future incidents such as the one at Wabamun Lake. More than one-third (34 percent) felt these companies should take some sort of preventive measure or have some sort of risk management system in place. A quarter of respondents wanted large-scale industrial companies to have emergency plans and supplies in place for such incidents. Thirteen percent thought companies should maintain their sites better and have test runs in case of emergencies. Eleven percent felt industrial companies should be more honest, open, and accountable to the public.

The *Poll Station* surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking. ✓

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