

Oil Spills in the Amazon Rainforest

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Hundreds of oil spills have occurred in the Amazon Rainforest why is the world only finding out about it now?

The Amazon

The Amazon rainforest is the largest and most biodiverse tropical rainforest in the world. Located in northern South America and with a basin of 2,300,000 square miles, the Amazon Rainforest extends across eight countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. Hosting more than ten million different species of animals, plants, insects and 30 million people including 350 indigenous tribes. The Amazon Rainforest was once known as the “lung” of the world, but due to deliberate corporate negligence and intention, massive part of the rainforest, trees, plants, and animals are endangered and the indigenous people who have lived there for centuries are on the verge of extinction.



The Problem

Oil spills are caused by oil rigs breaking, pipes bursting, or deliberate dumping. Thousands of tons of oil can seep into the ground. Oil spills are catastrophic. To give you an visual example, an oil spill that occurred in the Amazon Rainforest located in Ecuador in 1970 was the size of the state of Rhode Island.



How Oil Spills Impact the Environment

Oil spills affect wildlife, marine life and human life.

Spilled oil harms all living things. Oil adheres to mammals fur. When an animal tries to clean themselves they digest the poisonous oil into their systems.

Oil also smothers and coats the feathers of birds, weighing them down and keeping them from flying. If a bird isn't cleaned, they will die.

For centuries indigenous people survived by hunting and living off the land (plants, mushrooms, etc.) As oil from these spill continue to seep into the soil, all the vegetation is destroyed leaving people with limited sources of food.



How Humans are Affected

Direct exposure to oil spills can have lasting effects on people.

Breathing contaminated air - Massive lung damage can occur when breathing in oil vapors for a long period of time.

Direct contact with skin - People exposed to oil on their arms, feet, legs can develop serious skin rashes.

Cancer can occur from years of constant exposure to oil and oil vapors .

Birth Defects - Children are born with horrible defects.



Daily Life

For years the oil companies have been telling the people of the rainforest lies - that nothing will happen to them.

Bathing in contaminated water - People in the Amazon have no choice but to bathe in oil slicked waters. The oil can seep into their bodies through open wounds and swallowed without them knowing.

Eating Contaminated Food - Oil attacks all living things, plants, animals and water. Even if water is boiled before drinking, there is no escaping the contamination.



Global Warming and Climate Change

Burning oil releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, contributing to the warming of our planet. In order to avoid the worst impact of climate change, scientists say the world can not afford to burn more than one third of known oil reserves.

Oil is one of the biggest contributors to global warming. It is also a multi-trillion dollar global business. The world is slowly realizing the damage that has been done and what will happen to the earth if we let it continue.



Social Justice Issues

We know the destruction that oil spills have on all living things. What is not always talked about is the damage it does to people. A spill whether it happened recently or decades ago causes mental, physical and financial stress to the people in the affected communities.

Oil companies continue to dominate our lives whether we are aware of it or not. Oil companies fund government and environmental programs, they give the impression of caring and helping, but they are really destroying.



What Can You Do To Help?

What can you do to help?

Educate and create awareness! Oil spills contaminate the water, land, air, all living things.

Volunteer with local environment organizations like Greenpeace, Amazon Watch, Rainforest Action Network, National Wildlife Federation.

Create your awareness campaign using social media to reach millions of people.

Find out if your political representative took money oil companies for their campaigns. If they did, call them out on it.

<https://www.opensecrets.org>

Oil Spills are not just in the Amazon rainforest, they are everywhere. Help raise awareness and money to clean up the shore, and animals.

Ride your bike!

Organizations that you can join:

<https://amazonwatch.org>

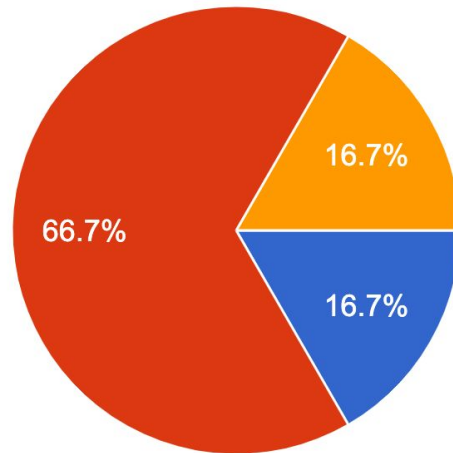
<https://www.ran.org>

<https://www.nwf.org>

Survey Results

Who is responsible for the cleanup of an oil spill?

12 responses

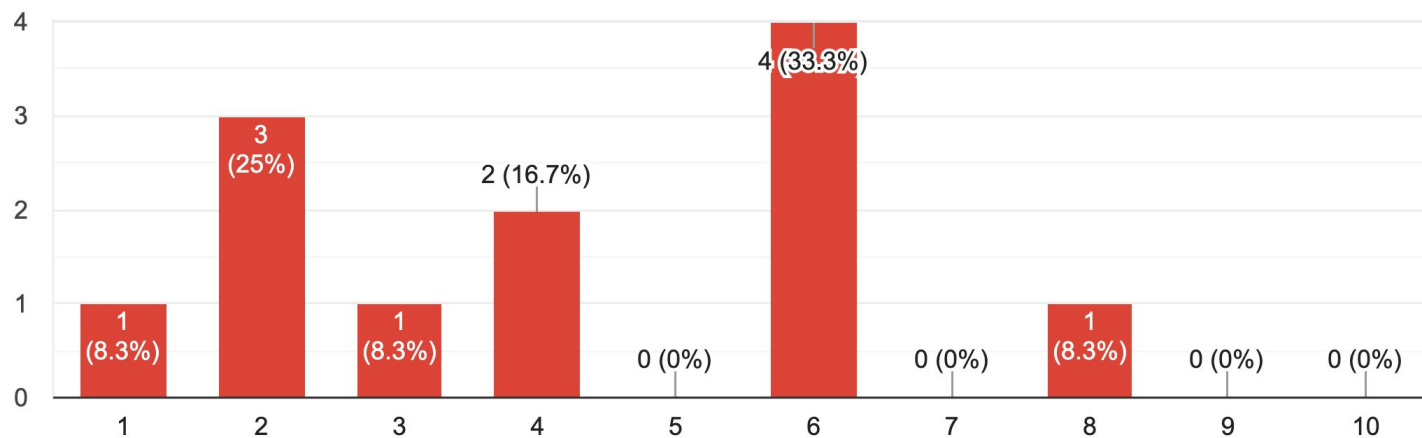


- The Government
- The oil company
- The people that live there

Survey Results

How aware do you think people throughout the world are of oil spills that have happened or are happening in the Amazon?

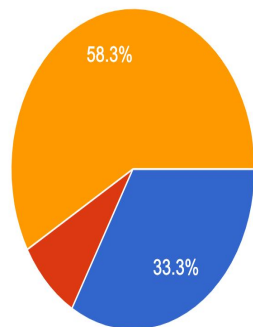
12 responses



Survey Results

Although they occur in a different part of the world, do you realize the impact oil spills have on our eco-system?

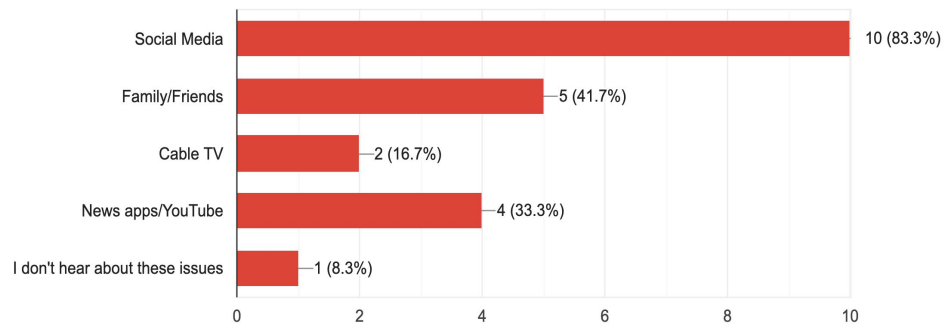
12 responses



- Yes
- No
- I realize but I don't know enough about it.

If you hear about these issues, Where/how do you get your information about these oil spills.

12 responses



References

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