

Hazardous chemical spills into Carson River in Alpine County, closes highways, forces evacuations

By Kathryn Reed

Unknown amounts of a bleach-like chemical spilled into the Carson River on Wednesday near Woodfords.

Even though the tanker truck carrying the sodium hypochlorite crashed into a power pole about 10am May 9, no one had been allowed into the area as of 6pm because of the danger the chemical poses. Depending on the concentration it is dangerous to inhale or touch.

A one-square mile from the crash site was evacuated.

Hazmat crews from the Nevada National Guard were sent in to secure the site.

The chemical is a disinfectant similar to bleach. In fact, when it is combined with water it becomes bleach. It can cause pH in the water to increase.

“There are too many variables to speculate the impacts at this point,” Scott Ferguson with Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Because his team and others have not been allowed into the discharge site it has not been determined how much of the chemical reached the west fork of the river. Also unknown is the concentration of the chemical. The river flow will be another factor.

Most of the users downstream are livestock and agriculture.

Ferguson said without more facts he could not say if there is any danger or if the chemical could have dissipated.

He added that agencies from both states are cooperating.

According to an alert sent out by the California Office of Emergency Services the driver of the truck died. California Highway Patrol was not able to confirm this or to give out any information about the driver.

Traffic is not allowed to head west on Highway 88 at Picketts Junction. The road is also closed at the California/Nevada border. There is not estimation when it will be opened.