

# Northwest Area Committee / Regional Response Team



U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security  
**United States  
Coast Guard**



IDAHO  
**BUREAU OF HOMELAND SECURITY**



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## Responding to environmental emergencies



View from the bridge of a tanker coming into Puget Sound.  
Photo: USCG

The authority for federal entities to respond to environmental emergencies comes from two different sources, depending on the scale of the incident. One source is under the “National Contingency Plan” which requires *no disaster declaration*. The other source is the “Stafford Act” which requires a *disaster declaration*.

The majority of oil and hazmat spills that require federal assistance to state and local partners are isolated to incidents that do not require a disaster declaration. These responses are carried out using the National Contingency Plan, the Northwest Area Contingency Plan and any applicable local and facility response plans.

If a federal disaster is declared, the response is executed using the National Response Framework and coordinated by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The National Contingency Plan is an annex to the National Response Framework. *See table below.*

**Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA):** This law created a tax on the chemical and petroleum industries and provided broad Federal authority to respond directly to releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances that may endanger public health or the environment.

**Clean Water Act (CWA) as amended by the Oil Protection Act (OPA):** This Act provides for spill prevention requirements, spill reporting obligations, and spill response planning and authorities. It regulates the prevention and response to accidental releases of oil and hazardous substances into navigable waters, on adjoining shorelines, or affecting natural resources belonging to or managed by the United States.

**Stafford Act:** This Act constitutes the statutory authority for coordination of most Federal disaster response activities especially as they pertain to FEMA and FEMA programs.

**National Oil and Hazardous Substance Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP):** This regulation lays out the authorities and procedures the federal government will use when responding to an oil or hazardous material incident that poses imminent threat to human health and the environment.

## Oil and Hazmat Response Under:

Applicable Laws >>>>	National Contingency Plan (no Disaster Declaration)	Stafford Act (Disaster Declaration)
Applicable Federal Plan	National Contingency Plan	National Response Framework
Federal Authorities	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act / Oil Pollution Act	Stafford Act
Regional Planning Entities	Northwest Area Committee, Region 10 Regional Response Team	Regional Interagency Steering Committee ( <i>resource coordination</i> )
Regional Federal Planning Lead	US EPA, US Coast Guard	FEMA ( <i>resource and funding coordination</i> )
State Planning Lead	State Environmental Response Agencies	State Emergency Management Agencies ( <i>resource and funding coordination</i> )
Local Planning Lead	Local Emergency Planning Committees	Local Emergency Management Agencies

For more information on the area plan or workgroups, please visit us on-line at [www.rrt10nwac.com](http://www.rrt10nwac.com).

# Northwest Area Committee / Regional Response Team

## Who coordinates planning for oil and hazardous material responses?



A Coast Guard inspector checks ships and docks around Puget Sound for oil and fuel leakage into the water. Photo: USCG

“Preventing an oil spill is our best option to protect the environment. Federal, state, and local agencies work with industry to reduce the risk of oil spills.”



Oil containment boom allows water to pass below the boom skirt while stopping the oil floating on the water.

### **Northwest Area Committee (NWAC)**

Area committees were established pursuant to the National Contingency Plan (NCP; 40 CFR Part 300), and are comprised of personnel from federal and state agencies who coordinate response actions with tribal and local governments and with the private sector. Area committees, under the coordinated direction of Federal On-Scene Coordinators (FOSC), are responsible for developing Area Contingency Plans (ACPs). Area committees are also required to work with the response community to develop procedures to expedite decisions for the use of alternative response measures.

### **Regional Response Team (RRT)**

The RRT is a regional version of the National Response Team which is responsible for regional planning and preparedness. The RRT provides a forum for federal agency field offices and state agencies to exchange information about their abilities to respond to on-scene coordinators' (OSCs) requests for assistance. RRT members do not respond directly to releases or spills, but may be called upon to provide technical advice, equipment, or manpower to assist with a response. The approval of the RRT is required for implementing certain response techniques such as dispersant application and in-situ burning of oil spills.

### **Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC)**

The RISC is comprised of representatives from each agency who hold primary responsibility for one or more Emergency Support Functions during a FEMA-led response and recovery effort. The RISC meets to coordinate interagency and inter-governmental issues related to disaster planning and resource coordination.

### **National Response Team (NRT)**

The NCP also establishes the National Response Team (NRT) which is responsible for national planning and preparedness activities before a response action and support to the FOSC and State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC) when activated during a response. NRT membership consists of designated representatives from key federal response and support agencies.

### **State Emergency Response Commission (SERC)**

Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA) has four major provisions: local emergency planning; emergency release notification; hazardous chemical storage reporting requirements; and toxic chemical release inventory. SERCs are designated by the Governor, and given responsibility for implementing EPCRA. The SERC supervises and coordinates the activities of their LEPCs, establishes procedures for receiving and proc-

essing public requests for information collected under EPCRA, and reviews local emergency response plans.

### **Tribal Emergency Response Commission (TERC)**

The TERC fulfills the same role for a Tribe as the SERC does for the State.

### **Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)**

SERCs fulfill their responsibilities by designating local emergency planning districts and appointing an LEPC for each district. The LEPC membership must include, at a minimum, local officials including police, fire, civil defense, public health, transportation, and environmental professionals, as well as representatives of facilities subject to the emergency planning requirements, community groups, and the media. The LEPCs must develop an emergency response plan, review it at least annually, and provide information about chemicals in the community to citizens.

## Northwest Area Contingency Plan

### What is the “plan”?

The Northwest Area Contingency Plan is a planning tool that provides for a safe, appropriate, and timely response to reports of oil or hazardous substance spills.

The Regional Response Team (RRT) brings together state and federal entities to jointly manage a response, and address

response technology issues. The Northwest Area Committee (NWAC), comprised of local, state, federal and tribal governments contributes to the planning process to ensure coordinated response activities. The Area Committee and the RRT work jointly to maintain and implement the Area Plan.

### Area Planning Tools

**Geographic Response Plans (GRPs):** GRPs are a prioritized list of booming strategies to be implemented in the first 12 to 24 hours after an oil spill while planning catches up to operations. GRPs include area maps, booming strategies, access points and staging areas.

**Joint Information Center Manual:** Designed to assist communicators during a response, the JIC Manual includes staffing ideas, policies and procedures for communicating with public media, and methods for conducting community outreach.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Federal and State Entities:** Each federal and state agency with spill response assets or authority is identified and their role is defined in an oil spill or hazmat incident.

**NW Wildlife Plan:** The NW Wildlife Plan outlines the resources and personnel needed by the Wildlife Branch within a Unified Command structure on an oil spill to reduce the impacts on wildlife during the response.

**Notification List:** Each state has a short list of required entities that must be notified of spills. The notifications begin the process of getting all appropriate players involved in a response.

**Incident Command System Implementation:** All signatories have agreed to use the Incident Command System when responding. Anticipated ICS positions for an environmental response are listed along with each position's duties.

**Funding Mechanisms:** The funding source for a response is dependent on geographic area, contaminant involved and presence of a responsible party. The NWACP outlines each funding source and how to access it rapidly.

**Applicable State and Federal Regulations:** The plan has pulled together and summarized regulations that may come to bear during an oil or hazmat response.

#### Who are the Signatories?

*These are organizations that are legally bound to maintain and implement the area plan—*US Environment Protection Agency, Washington Department of Ecology, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, US Coast Guard District 13, Sector Seattle, and Sector Portland

*Key Planning Partners—These are organizations that contribute to the area planning process:* Department of Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, US Fire Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Health and Human Services, Department of Energy, Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, General Service Administration, State Health Agencies and Local emergency planners.

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“Nationwide, the safe shipment of oil and adequate preparedness to respond to an oil spill are top priorities for both industry and government.”

#### Concept of Operations

- Rapid notification of federal, state and local partners through the National Response Center.
- Utilize National Incident Management System and Incident Command System.
- Handle incident at lowest level possible.
- Use Unified Command for joint decision making.
- Use of the procedures agreed to in the NWACP to save time during a response.

# Northwest Area Committee / Regional Response Team

## Area Committee Workgroups

### **Communications and Public Outreach**

Provide leadership in the development and implementation of Area Public Affairs Policy to support responders at incidents and catastrophic events. Working cooperatively, we also intend to develop the next generation of outreach tools & methods for the best possible communication with the public.

### **Geographic Response Plans**

Provide a forum for the coordination of the development, refinement, and implementation of Geographic Response Plans in the Area Plan.

### **Hazardous Substances**

Provide overall leadership on the development, refinement, and implementation of information and data related to hazardous substance and Weapons of Mass Destruction response.

### **Response Technologies**

Provide overall leadership and technical assistance on improving the ability of responders to effectively use appropriate response technologies as oil spill response tools so that the environment and natural resources may be better protected.

### **Logistics**

Provide a forum for the coordination of response equipment and development of logistical support elements for spills or releases in the Northwest Area.

### **Wildlife Workgroup**

Provide a forum for the coordination, development, implementation, and maintenance of a Wildlife Response Plan for the Northwest Area.

## What are the different types of plans?

**National Contingency Plan** provides the organizational structure and procedures for preparing for and responding to discharges of oil and releases of hazardous substances.

**National Response Framework** facilitates the delivery of all types of federal response assistance to help states deal with the consequences of significant disasters.

**Regional Contingency Plans** include information on useful facilities and resources available for oil spill responses in various U.S. regions. The Federal Region 10 Regional Contingency Plan was developed

by the response team for the region covering Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

**Federal Agency Internal Plans** are used during preparedness planning or in actual responses, and are used when agencies are called upon to provide assistance in their respective areas of expertise.

**Facility and Vessel Response Plan** response plans describe actions facilities or vessels must take to respond to a worst-case discharge of oil or hazardous waste.

**Area Contingency Plans** provide specific details for how

individuals and agencies should act to prevent the threat of oil discharges and remove oil discharges when they occur.

**Local Contingency Plans** identify local oil spill response resources available from local governments with jurisdiction over or directly adjacent to marine waters.

**State Vessel and Facility Contingency Plans** identify specific equipment and strategies marine vessels and facilities must use in the event of an oil spill.

## Area Planning Process



Oil containment boom deployment.