

### *What is my role as an Elected Official?*

You will ensure that your jurisdiction is represented within Unified Command, and you will provide a trusted voice for your constituents. You may also add local knowledge to different response components: Information, Planning, Logistics, as well as setting cleanup priorities.

### *Who makes response decisions?*

Federal, State, Responsible party, Tribal, and Local representatives form a Unified Command (UC) and make consensus based response decisions. If consensus is not achievable, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) has the final decision making authority.

### *How do I request additional resources as a Tribal official?*

Make requests to the State and Federal responders.

### *How can I visit/observe the cleanup first hand?*

Response personnel will provide guided tours as requested throughout the duration of the response. The best way to connect is typically via the Liason Officer.

### *How will my constituents be informed?*

Via the Information Officer, the primary response agencies typically maintain an incident specific website, brief media at regular intervals, and provide status updates to stakeholders and the public.

## HOW SPILL RESPONSE IS ORGANIZED

The **National Response System (NRS)** is the legal/regulatory mechanism the Federal government uses to manage oil and hazmat incidents in coordination with States and Tribes.

The **National Contingency Plan (NCP)** is the regulation governing the NRS. [www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org)

### *What are the basic tenets of the National Contingency Plan?*

Spillers are required to notify the federal government when spills occur and are financially responsible. Federal & State On Scene Coordinators (OSC) are empowered with funding and authority to do what is necessary to protect human health and the environment. In the inland zone, EPA provides the OSC, in the marine zone, Coast Guard provides the OSC. Coordination between the OSC, Tribal, State, and local officials is mandated.

### *What is the legislation governing spill response?*

The Clean Water Act, as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 for oil spills and the Comprehensive Environmental Response and Cleanup Liability Act, known as CERCLA, and Superfund for hazardous material releases.

### *Does oil spill and hazmat response use different authorities than disaster response?*

Yes. It is important to understand that spill responses are funded and managed differently from other large emergencies. For most large disasters, like a hurricane or landslide, federal support is provided through the Stafford Act at the request of states or tribes. The National Contingency Plan is triggered by any hazardous materials spill and federal funding is available to support all response actions.

# Oil Spill Response Quick Reference Guide For Local Elected Officials



The NWAC is the regional planning body for oil spill and hazmat responses. To join this group and learn more, visit:

**[www.rrt10nwac.com](http://www.rrt10nwac.com)**

*Or call:*

**Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10:**  
206-553-1263

**US Coast Guard Sector, Puget Sound:**  
206-217-6002

**US Coast Guard Sector, Columbia River:**  
503-861-6211

*Prepared by the the Northwest Area Committee (NWAC).*

### Who pays for a spill?

In the short term, the Environmental Protection Agency or US Coast Guard, as the Federal On-Scene Coordinator can reimburse the costs of other government agencies through Pollution Removal Funding Authorizations (PRFA). These are issued to tribal nations and other government agencies only if they are assigned to work on the response under Unified Command.

Ultimately, the responsible party is required to pay all valid costs associated with the response.

There is a separate claims process for compensating citizens and businesses for their losses caused by the spill.

### What is the spiller's responsibility?

The spiller is required by law to provide all measures necessary to mitigate an incident. If they are unwilling or unable to manage the cleanup effectively, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator has immediate access to fund technical and cleanup contractors, and the option to "federalize" the response.

### How am I notified of a spill?

Notifications are required by law. Procedures vary by location and circumstance. If you have questions on how you will be notified, please contact your State, County or Tribal Emergency Management Office.

### What preparedness activities are happening in my area?

The Northwest Area Committee meets regularly to improve preparedness and update the Northwest Area Contingency Plan. Drills and exercises scheduled around the region are an important opportunity. Anyone with a role in oil and hazmat response is welcome to join the committee and participate, including Tribal leadership.

More info at [www.rrt10nwac.com](http://www.rrt10nwac.com).

## SPILL RESPONSE TIMELINE

This is a simplified diagram showing a representative set of typical steps during oil and hazmat responses which are large enough to engage State and or Federal resources. Each response is unique and may require fewer or additional steps. Although these steps are presented as linear, they often overlap.

Please note that the circular arrows in the middle indicate that these steps continue until cleanup endpoints are met.

