

Regional Response Team/Northwest Area Committee Oil Spill Contingency and Response Planning

Introduction

When prevention efforts fail and a spill of oil or hazardous materials occurs, spill responders must quickly organize and establish incident-specific priorities to focus on the difficult task of cleaning up the spill. The National Response System ensures coordinated spill planning and response efforts by government and industry. Cleanup of spills under the National Response System is the responsibility of the polluter, so the System includes requirements to ensure this happens, and has the authority and resources to quickly augment or make up for responder inadequacy.

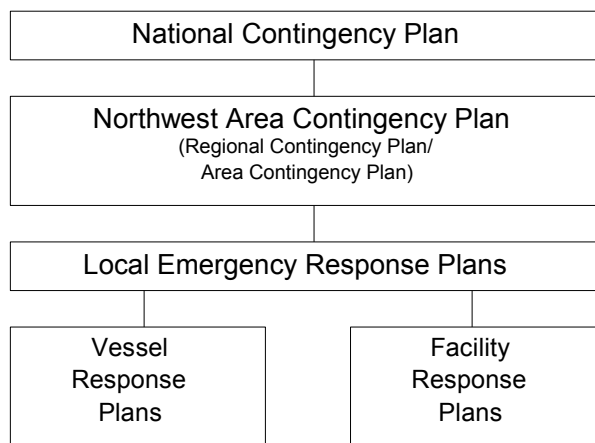
Spill Contingency and Response Plans

National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan: Response planning in the U.S. is accomplished through a mandated set of interrelated plans. The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, commonly referred to as the National Contingency Plan (NCP), provides the broad, national priorities and framework to ensure efficient, coordinated, and effective action to minimize the effects of oil and chemical spills. The NCP is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in consultation with the National Response Team (NRT), which consists of 16 federal agencies with interests in various aspects of emergency response to pollution incidents.

Regional Contingency Plans: Ten Regional Contingency Plans are modeled after the NCP and add information specific to the region; these plans are written by Regional Response Teams (RRTs) whose membership includes all states in the region.

Area Contingency Plans: The next tier of plans is Area Contingency Plans (ACP), which cover sub-regional geographic areas. The ACPs are a focal point of response planning, providing detailed information on response procedures, priorities, and appropriate countermeasures. In the Northwest, the Regional Contingency Plan and Area Contingency Plan have been combined into one document called the Northwest Area Contingency Plan.

Local Emergency Response Plans: Local emergency response plans are produced by local emergency planning committees (LEPCs). LEPCs have membership from government agencies, including local fire, police, emergency managers, industry, citizens, and other interested parties. These plans guide local efforts in



responding to an oil or hazardous materials spill.

Industry Response Plans: The final tier of plans are the Facility Response Plans and the Vessel Response Plans. These are required for oil cargo handling facilities or vessels. These plans detail pollution response action plans for the specific vessel or facility, and must be submitted to the USCG or EPA for review or approval, depending on the threat to the environment. Facilities that store large volumes of highly flammable or toxic chemicals are required to produce Risk Management Plans which, in addition to other things, outline how the facility will respond to a release.

Plan Testing and Improvement: The National Response System is regularly exercised. This ensures that the plan is current and that responsibilities assigned by the plan are tested and understood.

Spill Roles and Responsibilities

Oil spill responses can involve a large number of organizations due to the potential for widespread and diverse impacts. Government agencies at several levels may have jurisdiction over different aspects of a spill response. To ensure effective coordination, lead agencies have been designated within the National Response System to coordinate or direct spill response efforts. While many spills are small and cleaned up by the spiller under the supervision of local authorities, the National Response System ensures that state and federal resources are available to ensure adequate cleanup on larger or complex spills.