



Marine Safety Information Bulletin



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VRP-ACP Relationships in Pacific Northwest Region Changes to Area Contingency Planning Construct

This Bulletin serves to alert all vessel response plan (VRP) holders with vessels operating within the Oregon and Washington federal navigable waterways of structural changes to the area contingency planning construct and physical location of applicable Area Contingency Plans (ACPs).

Over the past 20 years, Area Contingency Planning functions for all United States Coast Guard (USCG) Captain of the Port (COTP) Zones covering Oregon and Washington have been managed at the Federal Region 10 level. This regional (versus more local) approach, resulted in the creation/maintenance of a large single plan known as the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP). The NWACP has served as multiple, federally mandated plans, including the Regional Contingency Plan, EPA inland zone ACP and two USCG coastal zone ACPs.

USCG Sector Columbia River and Sector Puget Sound are specifically designated as separate and unique COTP Zones. Each Sector Commander is delegated Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC or OSC) authorities for their area of responsibility (33 CFR Part 3). Pursuant to the National Contingency Plan (NCP), the FOSCs are “responsible for overseeing the development of the ACP in the area of the OSC’s responsibility” [40 CFR § 300.120(e)]. Furthermore, “under direction of the [F]OSC,” Area Committees are responsible for developing ACPs for each designated area [40 CFR §§ 300.105(c)(4), 300.210(c)(1)].

To restore and facilitate area contingency planning and management activities at the local COTP/FOSC level (as discussed above and so directed by the NCP) and to align with the rest of the service, distinct coastal zone ACPs and associated area committees will now be maintained/managed by the pre-designated FOSCs at both Sector Columbia River and Sector Puget Sound. The coastal zone ACPs will no longer be managed as a subordinate component of the NWACP. However, the USCG will work with Regional Response Team 10 to ensure the new stand-alone coastal zone ACPs for both Sector Columbia River and Sector Puget Sound are appropriately aligned with the EPA inland ACP and the RCP for Region 10. Please keep in mind, while ACPs are federally mandated/managed plans, a State may set standards (independent of ACPs) for facilities and vessels operating in State waters, and that those standards may be more stringent than federal standards.

The current NWACP will no longer function as the USCG coastal ACP for Sector Columbia River and Sector Puget Sound. Names and locations of relevant ACPs (inland and coastal) are detailed below. Vessels operating or intending to operate in the areas listed below must have VRPs consistent with current versions of ACPs as required by 33 CFR §§ 155.1030(h) or 155.5030(f). If a VRP is impacted by these ACP changes, please submit revisions to the VRP during the annual review. VRP planholders are reminded that this annual review is required within one month of the anniversary date of USCG VRP approval and that VRP revisions and amendments must be conducted in accordance with procedures and requirements in 33 CFR § 155.1070.

Links to relevant Area Contingency Plans in Oregon and Washington	
For the Sector Columbia River coastal zone:	https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/columbia-river
For the Sector Puget Sound coastal zone:	https://homeport.uscg.mil/port-directory/seattle-(puget-sound)
For the EPA inland zone, continue to use:	https://rrt10nwac.com/NWACP/Default.aspx