**REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM 10/NORTHWEST AREA COMMITTEE (RRT/NWAC)**

**OPEN SESSION MINUTES**

**0800 – 1600 WEDNESDAY 15FEB2012**

**Jackson Federal Building, Seattle, WA**

**The sign-in sheets can be viewed** [**here**](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/Public%20sign-in%20sheets.pdf)**.**

**Introduction**

CAPT Ferguson of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Sector Puget Sound (SPS) gave an introduction and welcomed everybody, adding that issues that emergency responders face today are the same issues that they faced in 1988. He added that he has concerns about how to deal with communities and handle public outreach. CAPT Ferguson asked the group to think about making true headway with their task forces (TFs) and to focus on putting energy into them. He emphasized the “V” of effective response, with two legs made up of the Incident Command System (ICS) and information management. CAPT Ferguson stated that ICS training needs to be revitalized, and that information needs to be managed with regard to marketing, public opinions, social media, managing phone banks, liaisons, and VIPs.

Calvin Terada of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) welcomed everyone. He stated that one of the goals of these meetings is to make new friends and connect with other agency counterparts. He reminded the group about what a great team we have here.

Dale Jensen of the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) welcomed everyone and reminded them about the town hall meeting, which will take place at 7:00 pm at the Seattle Public Library. He pointed out that the meeting will be another good opportunity for people to build relationships. Mr. Jensen stated that the risk picture is constantly changing, and that everyone needs to better position themselves to respond to something that may occur. He added that at the state level, House Bill 1186 has passed, and there is a stakeholder process currently taking place. If anyone would like to provide input, please visit Ecology’s website.

Mike Zollitsch of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (OR DEQ) welcomed all of the attendees and stated that his focus is on working with people. He added that he thinks it is important to listen to others and see where they are coming from. This is a valuable way to learn things that you might be able to apply to your work.

The microphone was passed around the room so that each person could introduce themselves.

**Local/County Response Update**

Don Price of the King County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) gave a power point on the new concept of operations for their office which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/King%20County%20Response%20Update%20-%20Local%20Level.pptx). He stated that the key issues for their team are the same as CAPT Ferguson had mentioned earlier; ICS and information management. He emphasized that the various agencies need to be aligned in using a common system for response, and added that their office has re-embraced the ICS structure, investing in a TF-style of responding to assistance requests. Mr. Price also stated that the planning that the NWAC has done has allowed the King County to clearly see the roles they must fill and prepare better for an event in this area.

Calvin Terada asked Mr. Price if they have been able to share their learning experiences with the other counties in Washington. Mr. Price replied that each county runs things differently, but agreed that their process and methodology might be helpful to other counties. He has not had the opportunity to speak with his counterparts in other agencies about an NWAC-type response, but there has been large support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Mr. Dale Jensen asked Mr. Price about how their office handles volunteer management, to which Mr. Price replied that spontaneous volunteers are always a challenge. He added that there is no clear solution to that as of this time.

**Task Force Updates**

Ms. Heather Parker of USCG District 13 (D13) gave an introduction on the TFs and how they were selected. Nine product-specific TFs have been established to develop deliverables key to the 2012 Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP) update

Places of Refuge (POR) Update: Tim Lupher of USCG D13 gave a Power Point presentation which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/POR%20TF.ppt). He explained that a POR is a site where a vessel can be taken when it is in a situation of imminent danger. This TF has been around for a while, and has been working on how this decision gets made.

Derelict Vessels: Kelly Thorkilson of USCG Sector Columbia River (SCR) reported that this TF has been meeting for six to eight months now. They have been conducting coordinated joint patrols of derelict vessels, and have been working on a way to identify potential derelict vessels. They have also created a matrix to determine specific regulatory authorities and are currently populating this matrix. Another accomplishment is that they developed derelict vessel stickers to tag boats letting the owners know that vessel has been identified as a potential derelict vessel, and asking the owner to contact the TF. In addition, the TF has developed a generic site safety plan for joint patrols in order to be in compliance with safety requirements. One challenge for this TF is that they lost momentum over the holidays. Another challenge has been finding funding for taking care of vessels. If a vessel is not a pollution or navigational threat, it is difficult to find money for it. Ms. Thorkilson stated that they are hoping to work with the National Response Team (NRT) derelict vessels TF on this. The next meeting for this TF will be on February 28, where they will get re-focused, incorporate any objectives from the NRT, discuss funding opportunities, and start working on removing some higher threat vessels. They will also be developing training plans for safe boarding and will identify deconstruction yards, especially for large vessels with contaminants. In addition, they would like to review and complete their regulatory authority matrix, complete their training outline and find additional ways to tap into grant money for removals.

Cultural and Historic Preservation: Mr. Andy Smith of US EPA described how he became the facilitator of this TF. Mr. Smith had been called out to the Yellowstone pipeline spill this past summer, and was tasked with dealing with the cultural and historic preservation issues. He stated that in the National Contingency Plan (NCP) there is a national programmatic agreement for how to deal with SHPO items. Mr. Smith added that with these kinds of issues, the more you can figure out ahead of time, the better. The work product for this TF is to obtain a copy of this programmatic agreement to put into the NWACP. There will be a kickoff meeting on March 21 in Lacey, which will be an all-day meeting to talk about issues and concerns. The biggest challenge for this TF right now is trying to engage the Tribes, because there are so many. They will discuss this at the meeting in March.

General Community Outreach: Cdr. Agneta Dahl of USCG SPS gave a Power Point presentation on this TF, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/Outreach%20TF.ppt). This TF is a new group, which has had one teleconference so far. Their next meeting will be at the end of February, where they will start working on creating their products.

Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment and Dispersants/In-Situ burn: Ms. Linda Pilkey-Jarvis of Ecology gave a Power Point presentation on these two TFs, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/RRT%20Task%20force%20slides.pptx). The In-situ TF has met once on a conference call and has members from around the nation, including many industry people with knowledge of dispersants and in-situ burning. The Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment TF will have a scoping conference call in March.

Geographic Response Plans (GRPs): Cdr. Mike Schoonover of USCG SPS reported that this new TF had its first meeting at the end of January at USCG Offices. They have been tasked with filling in gaps between existing GRPs. Their goal is to come up with strategies for doing this, which will be included in the next version of the NWACP. This TF’s website is up and running and they have an initial template for their document. Their next meeting will be in Lacey during the week of March 5th, with the objective of populating their template. Cdr. Schoonover emphasized that they will not be opening the existing GRPs, just filling the holes around them.

Wildlife: Charlie Hebert of United States Fish and Wildlife (USF&W) gave a Power Point presentation on this TF, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/Wildlife%20Task%20Force%20Update.RRT.2-15-12.pptx). They held a teleconference several weeks ago.

**Effective Daily Recovery Capacity (EDRC) of Skimmers**:

LCDR Drew Casey from USCG Office 533 gave a Power Point presentation over the phone. His presentation can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/EDRC_Allen.ppt). He discussed the background of EDRC, how it was used during Deep Water Horizon (DWH), comments that were received from Oil Response community, and talked about options to move forward with the issue.

Mr. Alan Allen, an oil spill specialist works in different roles with different agencies during spills and in prevention. He has been working on the EDRC effort through Gen West. Mr. Allen continued LCDR Casey’s Power Point presentation, and talked about the 3% of oil that was mechanically recovered in DWH. He stated that one goal is to manage the expectations of the public, ourselves and industry, of how much oil we should be able to reasonably pick up, burn, and disperse. Mr. Allen added that 3% doesn’t sound like a very good number, because it is out of the full amount released, not the total amount which is accessible. Some oil never gets to surface and some evaporates, making it unrecoverable. The percentage recovered is actually 9-10% of what is available. For DWH 40-50% of the oil was actually burned, skimmed and dispersed.

Someone asked a question about how to sell this 40-50% recovery rate to the American public. Mr. Allen answered that the best way to educate people is to do it before a spill occurs. He added that during DWH, the public had to be educated along the way. People were given “Burn 101” courses so that they could better understand why so much smoke was being produced. He also added that it is difficult to educate people ahead of time because people are generally uninterested unless a spill is actually going on.

Someone from the audience asked the question: What do you see as a methodological approach for debris? Mr. Allen answered that anything which could foul up a boom should be taken into consideration when you are thinking of options. Someone else asked a question about long you can expect a fire boom to last. Mr. Allen replied that in the past, he had tested boom that failed within minutes, but under the best conditions, boom can last through 10-14 burns. Under the worst conditions, they last for around 4 burns.

Capt Ferguson, stated that here in the Pacific Northwest, mechanical cleanup is preferred. He asked for Mr. Allen’s thoughts on how to get local communities and political leaders to embrace in-situ burning and dispersants. Mr. Allen replied to start by not referring to those as “alternative techniques”. He added that burning and dispersants deserve the same credibility as mechanical, and that they are actually more efficient. He stated that people are afraid of fire until they know how to control it. He concluded by stating that a good planning standard is needed; that there is a need for a balanced perspective on impact, and balance perspective on what we should be expected to do.

**OSC Reports**

Ecology, Dave Byers: Mr. Byers gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/RRT%20SOSC%20Feb%202012.pptx). Ecology’s area of responsibility (AOR) includes coastal and inland zones, plus meth labs. He reviewed several specific responses and House Bill 1186. Someone from the audience asked Mr. Byers if he had any thoughts on how to respond to tar sands releases. Mr. Byers replied that he has no answers at this time, but assured everyone that Ecology is working with the Canadians on this through the Joint Response Team (JRT).

OR DEQ, Don Pettit: Mr. Pettit showed a figure, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/MarysRiverSingleDischarge.pdf). He reviewed the recent flooding that happened in Oregon. OR DEQ worked with FEMA to identify what areas were currently flooding, and what areas would be flooding within 48 hours, using the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA’s) flood gauge data. FEMA ran their HAZUS modeling to come up with maps for these areas, and OR DEQ superimposed information about where hazardous substances are located onto these maps. They put out calls to everybody in Willamette Valley about taking care of these hazardous substances. Mr. Pettit stated that this was the first time that they had done something like this. It was done very quickly, in multiple areas. He added that next time they would like to try to work with the local fire marshal’s office to reach out to every individual that shows up in the hazardous materials (HAZMAT) system.

US EPA, CAPT Andy Smith: CAPT Smith gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/RRT%202012%20EPA%20OSC%20Report.pptx). He covered specific recent incidents within the US EPA’s AOR.

USCG SPS: CDR Agneta Dahl: Cdr. Dahl gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/OSC%20Report%20SPS.ppt).

USCG SCR: LCDR Kelly Thorkilson: LCDR Thorkilson gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/SCR%20RRTBriefing%20FEB%202012.pptx). She noted that the LST-1166 case has been closed, and the vessel will just be monitored now.

**Municipalities with Response Capabilities:**

Mr. Howard Zorzi of Ecology gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/SpillsPresentationFeb2012.pptx).

Ms. Rachel McCrea is one of seven statewide municipal storm water people with the Washington Department of Ecology. She stated the Clean Water Act (CWA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program requires local governments to obtain permits for discharging storm water from their municipal storm water collection systems. In Washington, Ecology administers the NPDES permits, which do not cover industrial facilities or individual property owners that are putting their storm water into water bodies. Municipal storm water is not part of the sanitary sewer or part of a combined system; it is a separate storm water system that discharges to surface waters in the state. Ecology also has an individual storm water permit issues do the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). These permits clarify the obligations that local governments have to control or prohibit illicit discharges from their storm water systems. The permits focus on a small scale, like turbid runoff from construction sites, and require that municipalities create maps of their storm water systems. Permit-holders are also required to maintain their own hotlines and report spills to Ecology. If a spill is reported, Ecology’s Spills Program can decide if it is something they need to respond to. In addition, the permits require going out and looking for illicit discharges in the summer.

Mr. Eric Autry of the Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Spills Program gave a Power Point presentation, which can be viewed [here](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/files/files/SPU%20Spill%20Response%20%20Multi-Jurisdictional%20Coordination%20final.pptx).

Mr. Ben Budka of the King County Environmental Laboratory gave an overview of the County’s activities. Their lab is located on ship canal in Seattle, at the north end of the Queen Anne neighborhood and is made up of about 60 staff members, with seven different labs in the facility. One part of their lab resources is a field science unit. There are nine field scientists that go out on daily basis and collect environmental samples from around King County. There are four vessels at the lab, ranging in size from a Zodiac up to 43 foot research vessel. Because they are out every day, if they receive a referral or notification of something going on, they can usually get staff on-scene very quickly. They are also major supporter of other jurisdictions, and do a lot of work with the King County wastewater division. Mr. Budka stated that they have a system in place for getting public health signs posted at beaches, and have a community relations group that does door-to-door notifications for citizens. He added that there are a lot of natural phenomena that occur over the year, and receive many calls regarding those events, but they are so familiar with the timeframes in which they occur that they often know what it is. They also have a remotely operated vehicle that they have used a number of times to inspect outfalls.

Mr. Budka stated that as a result of budget cuts, he is taking on more roles at his laboratory. He also noted that they lost one of their response vehicles because it was under-utilized. Ms. McCrea stated that another affect of budget cuts is that small jurisdictions simply have no staff. At SPU, the Spill Response Program has not been affected by budget cuts.

Someone from the audience asked Mr. Budka if he has noticed any trends with the environmental data that his team has been collecting over the years. He answered that Lake Washington has improved in water quality. He also stated that as technology advances and we are able to look at lower detection limits, we are seeing different problems out there that nobody thought about before.

**Operational Commanders Brief**

This segment was facilitated by Lt. Cdr. Wade Gough of USCG SPS. The topic of this discussion was the Japanese Tsunami Debris and related coordination issues. Lt. Cdr. Gough stated that he wanted to hear different perspectives from people on where they fit into the Incident Command System structure in dealing with this issue and how they plan to coordinate communications. He added that there were several key agencies that would present first, including NOAA, US EPA, the Public Health Service, Ecology, Department of the Interior (DOI), FEMA, USF&W, International Bird Rescue, the United States Navy (Navy), the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), General Services Agency (GSA), the Seattle Audubon Society, and Tribal Representatives. After these groups presented, the floor would be opened up to any others who wanted to add to the discussion.

NOAA’s Gary Shigenaka informed everybody that Ms. Ruth Yender, member of the Steering Committee, is currently on a six month detail in Hawaii working on the tsunami debris issue. Mr. Shigenaka gave some background information on the earthquake and tsunami.

He stated that it cannot be tracked by satellite, and that there have been no confirmed tsunami debris identifications made for anything that has come ashore in the Pacific Northwest, or in Hawaii. The NOAA division chief has said that radioactivity from the debris is not expected to be a problem. In addition, most of the debris expected to make it to Hawaii and the west coast has not all come from the area of concern, and has had a long time to dissipate. Mr. Shigenaka stated that the last confirmed sightings he debris mass were in early January, well out in the middle of the Pacific. NOAA modelers predict it will begin coming ashore in Hawaii later this coming winter, and then in 2013, it should begin coming ashore in the Pacific Northwest. Ms. Heather Parker asked Mr. Shigenaka how they will identify that debris is actually from the tsunami, as opposed to just being normal debris. Mr. Shigenaka replied that there needs to be some solid way to link the debris to the tsunami. Someone from the audience suggested that looking at debris trends from past years might be a good indicator of whether the amount of the debris increases or not.

LCDR Wade Gough gave an update for USCG SPS. He stated that NOAA is the lead agency and coordinating body for reporting. The USCG does not have the authority to pick up debris materials unless they are hazardous. They also have limited capability for HAZMAT out on the coast, so they will be contracting out this work.

Ecology’s Dave Byers reported that they are currently watching what is happening in Hawaii, and will likely look to their leadership structure in the future. Ecology has a solid waste program to regulate waste disposal, but they do not have had funding for debris impacts. During previous impacts, this has fallen on the counties, who only receive technical guidance from Ecology. It would take special legislative appropriation to get funds for debris cleanup, but Mr. Byers added that they do have the Washington Conservation Corps as a resource. They are HAZMAT and disaster trained, and have been used in past to pick up debris. The Washington State Dept of Health has the lead role for any radiological issues, so they are focused on this, but nobody is expecting any radioactive material to come ashore. They might do some sampling to ease the worries of the public.

USCG Pacific Strike Team: The Pacific Strike Team operates out of Novato, California, and can make entries into any environment. They have members that are familiar with the National Response framework and the National Contingency Plan (NCP). The Strike Team will also be supporting Sector Honolulu.

The US EPA has a fully trained cadre of HAZMAT responders in Seattle and some in Portland. They have air monitoring equipment and a nationwide net of radiation monitors. Additional monitors were put up immediately following the Japan earthquake, but have since been taken down. US EPA Region 9 has a standing Ocean Debris Program, so Region 10 has been coordinating with them. They are also waiting for a good framework to come out of Hawaii.

LCDR Kelly Thorkilson reported that USCG SCR has been handling this situation exactly the same as USCG SPS.

Mr. Phil Bakke of FEMA reported that they will work with the state agencies and federal partners and will re-clarify roles for waterways with the ACOE and USCG to see if the Stafford Act can be used.

Mr. Charlie Hebert of the USF&W reported that they have great concerns about the debris impacts in Hawaii because there are a lot of national wildlife refuges there. They have some of the same concerns here in this region, as we have a lot of protected areas along coasts of Oregon and Washington, state parks, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuary lands that harbor large numbers of wildlife. Mr. Hebert reported that they do have a number of HAZWOPR-trained environmental contaminants specialists and some capability in their public information office to lend a hand with public outreach issues.

DOI’s Allison O’Brien reported that she has a counterpart in California, and one in Alaska that she has been communicating with. They are trying to maintain situational awareness.

Mr. Mike Zollitsch of OR DEQ stated that they are working with other agencies to figure out how to handle the debris issues, including who will take care of disposal, and how it will be funded.

The US Navy stated that this issue is not on their radar on the moment, but they do have hundreds of personnel trained in HAZWOPR, and have response boats.

USCG SPS’s CAPT Ferguson stated that he has major concerns because this issue fits very squarely in many areas and could be an NCP or National Response Framework event. He warned that the situation could turn out to be nothing, or could be this region’s version of Hurricane Katrina. He urged everyone to think about this and formulate a plan. He added that eventually, guidance will come down from senior levels of government that will appropriate an agency to serve as the lead on this.

The ACOE stated that they are interested in working with their partners, and noted that one of their key people is Eric Braun, in their Division Office. He is looking at the tsunami debris issue from a navigational perspective.

**Other Issues**

There will be a talk on February 16 on Seabirds of Puget Sound at the downtown REI. The doors will open at 6:30 pm. The presentation will begin at 7:00 pm and will end at 8:00 pm.

In May, there will be a Science and Oil Spills class in Seattle. For more information, please contact NOAA.

Mr. Dale Jensen announced that there will be a BC States Clean Pacific States Conference May 15-17 in Long Beach California.

Mr. Alan Allen stated that there is an ongoing Research and Development (R and D) effort on methods for igniting oil. There is a new method called the Aero-torch. Aero-torch testing has been done using a fixed-wing aircraft and a large fan. Mr. Allen explained that the reason we want to do this is that at times, large target areas need to be ignited. There is also a fire service application; it could be used for forest fire control to create a break in the fire.

**Closing Comments**

Mr. Dale Jensen thanked everyone for attending and stated that he learned a lot from the presentations. He emphasized that the more information the public has, the more knowledgeable they become.

Mr. Mike Zollitsch thanked the Steering Committee for putting the meeting together.

CAPT Ferguson thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Calvin Terada thanked everyone attending, adding that the next meeting will be May 30-31 in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. These meetings will be focused on pipelines.