



**Section 9331  
Marine Debris and  
Severe Marine Debris  
Events**

  
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## Marine Debris and Severe Marine Debris Events

### 9331.1 Introduction

The Marine Debris Research, Prevention, and Reduction Act, which legally established the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program, was signed into law by President Bush on December 22, 2006, and reauthorized by Congress as the Marine Debris Act in December 2012. The act initially set a \$10 million authorization for NOAA for implementation of the program, including identification and impact assessments, removal and prevention activities, research and development of alternatives to gear posing threats to the marine environment, and outreach activities. The Marine Debris Act, as reauthorized in 2012, included an added component—a Severe Marine Debris Event—and tasked NOAA to coordinate across federal, state, tribal, and local governments to ensure timely and efficient assessment and response.

### 9331.2 Severe Marine Debris Event

A Severe Marine Debris Event is caused by extreme circumstances, such as earthquakes, floods, storms, or massive maritime accidents. It may generate marine debris items not normally present, such as drums and other containers of fuel and chemicals, derelict vessels and floating docks, and other infrastructure debris presenting a risk of pollution and hazard to navigation and posing a threat to the environment, commerce, and human health and safety.

### 9331.3 Severe Marine Debris Events Plans: Oregon and Washington States

In response to the March 11, 2011 tsunami in northeastern Japan (a severe marine debris event that washed out an estimated 1.5 million tons of floating debris, some of which arrived along the U.S. West Coast and in Alaska and Hawaii), Oregon and Washington developed Governor-approved marine debris emergency response plans. The two plans, similar in format and composition, established task forces in each state, assigned roles and responsibilities to state agencies and support roles for federal agencies, and provided the details needed for response to marine debris on land and at sea for current and future severe marine debris events impacting the states.

The Oregon and Washington Marine Debris Emergency Response plans were created collaboratively through public meetings and by representatives from federal and state agencies, emergency managers, local and tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations and industries.

These plans provide information on the following for a Severe Marine Debris Event:

- Organization and assignment of responsibilities;
- Notification procedures;
- Description of roles for agencies involved; and
- Jurisdictions.

The Washington State Marine Debris Coordination Plan may be found here: <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/regional-action-plan/washington-marine-debris-action-plan>

The State of Oregon Japan Tsunami Marine Debris Plan may be found here: [http://www.oregon.gov/OEM/Councils-and-Committees/Documents/jtmd\\_plan.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/OEM/Councils-and-Committees/Documents/jtmd_plan.pdf)