

**PLACE OF REFUGE EXERCISE
Towson, Maryland
Tuesday, January 27, 2009
1300 – 1510**

FACILITATORS: Mr. Gary Ott, Retired National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC), and LT Kristen Preble, US Coast Guard (CG)

HANDOUTS:

- Place of Refuge (POR) Exercise Agenda
- Place of Refuge – Human Health and Safety Considerations
- Place of Refuge Probability Determination
- Place of Refuge – Natural Resources Consideration
- Place of Refuge – Economic Considerations
- Place of Refuge Summary Sheet
- Place of Refuge PowerPoint Presentation
- Summary of Gary Ott’s presentation slides

Mr. Ott provided the membership on a summary of today’s exercise; a Place of Refuge Exercise for vessels in distress. This exercise will have the RRT membership:

- Review the CG Place of Refuge Policy, Commandant Instruction (COMDTINST) 16451.9
- Review an actual example where the policy was used
- Use the POR Risk Assessment Job Aid (Enclosure 2 of COMDTINST 16451.9) for a Hampton Roads case study
- Consider changes needed for the Area Contingency Plan (ACP)
 - Notifications and participants
 - Methods for participants to communicate
 - “Consequence management” strategies
 - Access equipment
 - Coordination with National Response System (NRS)
 - Access Pre-planning in ACP

The participants were guided through the POR process as an example for understanding of the decision-making process. Next, the participants were asked to separate into one of three breakout groups to run a real-life scenario for (1) economic considerations, (2) human health and safety considerations and (3) natural resources considerations. The participants conducted their analysis for the Liberty Trader incident (a container vessel/barge that caught on fire in 1994 in the Port of Hampton Roads) using the POR Risk Assessment Job Aid. The POR sites the participants evaluated were the Gulf anchorage near VA Beach and Moon Engineering docks.

Discussion Topic – It was noted that the POR Risk Assessment Job Aid does not take into consideration decision factors such as security and search and rescue because the

Captain of the Port uses separate decision-making tools to evaluate these factors. Therefore, in some cases, a port security decision may override, due to political pressure, the decision-making for the POR. However, in most cases the COTP has made the port security decision prior to identifying the sites to consider as Places of Refuge which will be evaluated by using the POR Risk Assessment Job Aid.

Recommendations – When conducting POR exercises within your Area of Responsibility, work through some local cases first and don't jump right into the process with one of your worst case incidents. It is important to have a solid foundation of understanding the POR decision-making process before complicating it with a difficult incident.

Lessons learned from the POR exercise process –

1. Perspectives on relative risk are helped by using graphics that compare the current case with a worst case.
2. Risk-informed POR decision-making requires assessment of more factors than are scored in the POR Job aid.
3. Citizen health and safety is a key factor when considering the movement of a vessel into a port.
4. POR risk scores are low for vessels that are scheduled to the Port and that are fully supported by owners and agents with a commitment of response resources.

POR scenarios should be exercised annually to facilitate continued understanding of how the decision-making process works within the port.

Meeting adjourned at 1510.