



Tribal Engagement and the Region 3 Regional Response Team



Mission

The mission of the Region 3 Regional Response Team (RRT3) is to protect public health and safety and the environment during oil and hazardous substance incidents within Region 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia) as mandated by the National Contingency Plan (NCP).

The RRT3 is committed to developing response plans and coordinating preparedness activities prior to a pollution incident with our tribal partners with a goal to increase the involvement of federally-recognized tribes represented on the RRT3.

The National Contingency Plan

The NCP is the federal regulation that dictates how the federal government, tribes and states will work together to respond to significant oil and hazardous materials spills and releases. The NCP also establishes the Regional Response Teams and their roles and responsibilities, including preparedness, planning and response; these roles and responsibilities are codified in a Regional Contingency Plan. The RRTs also provide oversight and consistency review for Area Contingency Plans and Geographic Response Strategies, both documents that lay out detailed response techniques in specific areas in response to an oil spill of hazardous substance incident. In addition to RRT3, there are additional interagency coordinating groups in Region 3 that are established through the NCP: the Inland Area Committee (IAC) and six coastal zone area committees maintained by U.S. Coast Guard (Buffalo, Delaware Bay, Maryland National Capitol Region, , Ohio Valley – Huntington, Ohio Valley – Pittsburgh, and Virginia).



Both the RRT3 and the Inland Area Committee cover Region 3 states/commonwealths and meet regularly.

- **RRT3** is responsible for maintaining the Regional Contingency Plan (RCP), which is our regional blueprint for how federal, tribal, and state governments will respond to spills in a coordinated and effective manner. RRT3 membership is defined by regulation and is activated during a response to provide resources and assist with some response decisions. Current RRT3 members include the 15 federal agencies with authorities or resources for spill response, a representative from each state/commonwealth, and the Federally recognized Tribes. (A list of federally recognized tribes by state can be found at <https://www.bia.gov/service/tribal-leaders-directory>) tribes with an interest in Region 3 may also be consulted during responses. RRT3 Executive Committee is a group that meets privately and is limited to RRT3 members, Workgroup/Committee Chairs and any other government agency invited by one of those RRT3 members.
- **Region 3 IAC** is responsible for maintaining the Inland Area Contingency Plan (IACP), which is our blueprint for how federal, tribal, and state governments will respond to spills in a coordinated and effective manner in the inland zone (United States Environmental Protection Agency's Area of Response [AOR] authority). The RRT3 IAC is open to anyone with an interest in spill response. This includes all government agencies, industry, response contractors, resource trustees, environmental advocates, and private citizens.

Designation of a tribal representative provides a consistent and reliable manner for your tribe to be engaged in contingency planning and response actions.

Prior to a Response

This includes actions taken both prior to an emergency such as the development response plans, attending Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meetings, regional task force meetings, planning and conducting exercises, participating in IAC meetings, and planning efforts, attending IAC meetings, and sending responders to incidents when appropriate, for either training opportunities or to assist in the response by communicating tribal concerns.

By participating in IAC meetings and task forces, your tribe will have the ability to voice broad concerns, affecting tribal treaty rights as well as culturally and historically sensitive issues and areas. These meetings are also great opportunities to build connections with other responders who you may work with during a pollution incident.

Prior to emergencies, RRT3 Co-Chair and Vice-Co-Chair agencies are committed to:

- Providing annual notification to all tribes in Virginia of the public comment period for the IAC Inland Area Contingency Plan and Regional Contingency Plan updates.
- Inviting all Tribes to participate in the IAC and RRT3 meetings.
- Providing oil/hazardous material spill response and health and safety training (including Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response [HAZWOPER] certification and refresher) as agency budgets and schedules allow.
- Requesting tribal participation for drills and exercises that impact tribal lands or resources.

During an Incident

The coordination during an incident only involves agencies directly involved in the specific incident. Oil and hazardous material spills are overseen at the federal level by U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) for coastal incidents and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) for inland incidents.

When incidents occur upon tribal land or waters, federal, state, local, tribal, and responsible party representatives form a Unified Command. This structure enables incident commanders from each entity to collaboratively manage incidents while meeting the unique needs of different agencies. Tribes are encouraged to participate by sending a Tribal Incident Commander or participating as a Coordinating or Assisting Agency to ensure their needs are considered. Although not a requirement, tribal members can fill one or more essential roles, as capacity allows, including:

- **Tribal On Scene Coordinator (TOSC):** On Scene Coordinators are individuals who participate in Unified Command and make consensus-based response decisions. TOSCs need to be empowered to make decisions on behalf of the tribe, have jurisdiction over the impacted area and a working knowledge of and adequate training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and/or the Incident Command System (ICS).
- **Tribal Agency Representative:** The incident Liaison Officer on a spill response ensures Unified Command is aware of concerns held by stakeholder agencies. Tribal Agency Representatives work directly with the incident Liaison Officer.
- **Tribal Historic Preservation Officer:** This individual deploys to the response and provides guidance on cleanup actions to prevent disturbing tribal cultural resources on their lands.
- **Natural/Cultural Resource Specialist:** Resource specialists sit in the Environmental Unit and assist in planning cleanup tactics that are protective of natural and cultural resources.
- **Joint Information Center participant:** All messages from the response to the public are generated by the Joint Information Center (JIC). A tribal representative within the JIC could assist in generating information that is of interest to tribal members, and ensuring tribal members receive the information in a timely manner.
- **Community Relations Specialist:** In cases where members of a community are directly impacted by a spill, community involvement coordinators assist the JIC in having effective communication with the public and affected communities. These individuals may be in charge of holding public meetings or may go door to door to provide information to an impacted community.

Joining the RRT3 and IAC

How to participate in the RRT3 and Inland Area Committees:

- Sign up for our email listserv by navigating to our website – https://www.nrt.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=35 and send an email to the RRT3 Coordinator (Santiago.Cindy@epa.gov) requesting addition to the membership list. Additionally, links and copies of the various plans within the region are available from: https://nrt.org/site/region_list.aspx?region=3
- Attend RRT3 Meetings. These happen two times a year, typically May and November within Region 3. Meeting information is posted on the RRT3 Home webpage at: https://nrt.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=35.
- Join a Workgroup. Send an email to the RRT3 Coordinator (Santiago.Cindy@epa.gov) requesting information on available workgroups. The RRT3 Coordinator can coordinate admission to the selected workgroups including:
 - Regional Contingency Plan (RCP Re-write)
 - Information Management & Outreach (IM)
 - Consultation, Natural Resources & Damage Assessment (CNRDA)
 - Spill Response Countermeasures (SRC)
 - Training
- Attend IAC Meetings. These meetings typically occur in concurrence with the May and November RRT3 meeting.

How to officially join the RRT3:

- Optional: At your request, the RRT3 Co-Chairs will send a letter to your tribal leadership requesting participation.
- Tribal leadership sends a letter to the RRT3 Co-Chairs requesting that the tribe be included as a member and

designating a specific tribal representative and alternate to participate in the RRT. It is important that this person be able to speak for the tribe or have ready access to tribal decision makers regarding spill response issues.

- RRT3 Co-Chairs acknowledge receipt of letter and welcome tribal representatives into the RRT.

FAQs

Q: Will the EPA pay or reimburse Tribal participants who are engaged in an emergency response? A: There are several options for funding Tribes as part of an emergency response. There are certain requirements that must be met. For more information, please contact the Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the response or the Inland Area Committee Chair, Myles Bartos.

Q: Will the EPA pay or reimburse Tribal participants to attend regular meetings?

A: EPA and USCG are not able to pay or reimburse tribes for participating in spill exercises or regular meetings but there may be grants that can help cover travel costs.

Q: If Tribes choose not to join the RRT3 and IAC, can Tribes still comment and provide suggestions on contingency plans?

A: Absolutely. The RRT3 and Inland Area Contingency Plans are public documents that are subject to a 30-day public comment period when they are updated annually or as required.

Q: What if my Tribe won't officially designate someone to make decisions on behalf of the Tribe?

A: That will only limit your tribe's ability to participate in Unified Command. There are many other ways to influence the response actions. All other possible roles in planning and response do not require delegated authority. It is recommended that all tribal representatives to the RRT3 have a mechanism for obtaining tribal council agreement on critical policy decisions.

Contacts for more Information

EPA:

Cindy Santiago, EPA RRT3 Coordinator: 215-814-3282; santiago.cindy@epa.gov

Mike Towle, RRT3 EPA Co-Chair: 215-814-3272; towle.michael@epa.gov

Kevin Boyd, Alternate RRT3 EPA Co-Chair: 215-814-3418; boyd.kevin@epa.gov

Myles Bartos, Inland Area Committee Chair: 215-814-3342; bartos.myles@epa.gov

USCG:

Dave Pugh, USCG RRT3 Coordinator: 757-398-6376; david.e.pugh1@uscg.mil

David Ormes, RRT3 Co-Chair: 757-398-6585; david.t.ormes@uscg.mil