

2026 Work Plan for Regional Response Team III

SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

The Annual Region III Regional Response Team (RRT3) Work Plan is a dynamic roadmap that guides the RRT's activities throughout the calendar year. It establishes clear priorities for the RRT and offers focused recommendations for On-Scene Coordinators (OSC), workgroups and committees, and area planning managers. This is a living document adaptable to the evolving needs of the response community, under the direction of the co-chairs with continuous input from the RRT3 members.

This Work Plan drives continuous improvement in federal and state/commonwealth capabilities and plans for responding to oil and hazardous substance incidents. It defines specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives that enhance the RRT's readiness and effectiveness. The work plan is developed through a collaborative process that prioritizes the following:

- Identifying and focusing on issues and projects that require RRT attention to significantly improve the readiness of RRT3 members to support OSCs during incidents.
- Concentrating on issues and projects within the RRT's administrative and operational purview, ensuring effective implementation and accountability.
- Selecting issues and projects that are realistically achievable within the RRT's capacity, considering member agency workload, available funding, and existing expertise.
- Researching and integrating successful strategies and policies from other regions to enhance area planning practices within RRT3.
- Facilitating information exchange on advancements in oil spill and hazardous substance response technology and procedures and prioritizing and coordinating RRT resources for optimal results.
- Expanding public outreach and education efforts and actively encouraging participation from federally recognized tribes in spill preparedness and response planning, including RRT membership.
- Actively involving other stakeholders and all interested parties in spill preparedness and response planning.

The RRT or Executive Committee can adjust or modify the issues and projects addressed annually based on emerging challenges and opportunities.

The RRT Executive Committee, with input from Workgroup Chairpersons, will develop the RRT3 Work Plan for submittal to the National Response Team (NRT) by January 31st of each calendar year. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and United States Coast Guard (USCG) RRT Coordinators ensure the timely finalization of the Work Plan and facilitate its implementation.

Workgroups will provide briefs on Workplan accomplishments and offer feedback to assigned tasks at each RRT Meeting as well as meetings with Executive Committee as requested.

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MISSION

The mission of RRT3 is to protect public health and safety and the environment by ensuring a coordinated, effective, and efficient response to significant oil or hazardous substance incidents within the area of responsibility for the RRT3.

VISION

- We will provide prompt, reliable, knowledgeable, and competent assistance to our OSCs and member agencies. Our actions will be decisive and purposeful.
- We will be recognized as a quality organization committed to adding value to federal, state/commonwealth, local, and industry efforts to mitigate the effects of oil, hazardous substance, and other incidents covered by the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP)/National Response Framework (NRF).
- Our membership will include all relevant segments of the regional response community. We will work as an efficient and effective team, pooling our talents and experience to provide the best possible assistance to pollution responders.
- We will operate all meetings, workgroups, and efforts to achieve goals and ideals identified in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Contingency Plan. We will be proactive and progressive in our deliberations to earn the respect of the entire response community for our resourcefulness and innovation.

PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES FOR 2026

Priorities are meant to advance, in part or in whole, our stated goals and initiatives, but may also reflect more immediate needs or requirements. RRT3 will continue to explore ways for continuing operations and collaboration and will leverage technology and other methods to properly support and advise FOSC's and response partners. ESC and Workgroup initiatives for the year 2026 include:

General RRT Management

Objective: Improve awareness of RRT roles, responsibilities, and capabilities.

Executive Committee Members

- Review and approve Workgroup products.
- Develop objectives and tasks for 2027 Work Plan
- Approve 2027 Work Plan

Co-Chairs

- Identify ways to ensure the RRT remains relevant, fresh and welcoming to all.
- Conduct at least two interactive virtual meetings per year focused on showcasing best practices and innovative ideas for RRT engagement, format, and member participation.
- Solicit input and remain transparent with the RRT Executive Committee and all RRT participants looking toward continual improvement

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- Serve as the conduit to the National Response Team, sharing information downwards, and pushing for appropriate national level policy and guidance updates.

RRT Coordinators

- Schedule, make logistical arrangements, and conduct two RRT3 meetings (Spring and Fall) during the year.
- Prepare meeting summaries and action items, annual report, and annual work plan.
- Manage the RRT3 Website to ensure that all documents hosted on [Site Profile - RRT III Home Page - NRT](#) are consistently accurate, valid, and up-to-date, contributing to a positive user experience, maintaining legal and regulatory compliance, and upholding the credibility of the RRT.

Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) Workgroup

Objective: Review and update the Region 3 Regional Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (R3RCP) in accordance with 5-year cycle.

- Implement Targeted Annual Appendix Reviews.
 - Identify and schedule the review of specific R3RCP Appendices based on a pre-determined rotation schedule, ensuring all appendices are reviewed within the 5-year cycle. The appendices to be reviewed for the workplan year will be identified and announced by the December RRT meeting of the previous year.
 - For each selected Appendix, conduct a focused review to identify necessary updates related to regulatory changes, technological advancements, lessons learned from recent incidents, or changes in organizational structure.
 - Draft a consolidated summary to include all recommended changes from the Workgroups and individual members.
 - Track the number of Appendices reviewed annually, the number of recommendations generated, and the timeliness of report submissions.
- Collaborate with Workgroups and Members for RCP Updates
 - Engage standing RRT Workgroups and individual members to review and recommend changes to specific sections of the R3RCP relevant to their expertise or area of responsibility.
 - Assign specific sections of the R3RCP to each Workgroup for review and provide recommendations for updates. Hold at least one dedicated meeting to discuss potential changes.
 - Establish a clear process for submitting and tracking proposed changes, including a standardized template for recommendations and a system for documenting the rationale behind each proposed change.
 - Draft a consolidated summary to include all recommended changes from the Workgroups and individual members.
 - Track the number of Workgroups and members participating in the review process, the number of recommendations received, and the number of recommendations incorporated into the updated R3RCP.

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- Coordinate with Standing RRT Workgroups on completing, publishing, and incorporating “Reserved” documents into the RCP.
- Manage 5-Year Full R3RCP Update and Approval Process.
 - Consolidate all recommendations for RCP updates.
 - Track the timelines for each action and ensure the full update is completed in accordance with the 5-year cycle.
 - Develop record of changes from annual reviews.
 - Submit the updated R3RCP to the RRT for review and approval by May 2030.
- **Objective: Support the RRT Coordinators in validating all documents on the RRT3 website.**
 - Review documents currently on the website.
 - Develop and publish new documents in appropriate locations.

Training and Exercise Workgroup

Objective: Coordinate training and exercise opportunities for RRT3 meetings.

- Proactively Identify and Prioritize Relevant Training Themes
 - Conduct monitoring of regional, national, and international trends, emerging threats, and lessons learned from recent incidents to identify pertinent RRT3 training and presentation themes.
 - Prioritize themes that address identified capability gaps or areas for improvement within the RRT3.
 - Actively solicit input from RRT3 members and stakeholders regarding desired training topics.
 - Document the rationale for selecting each training theme, linking it to specific regional, national, or international concerns.
- Develop and Execute a Comprehensive Annual Table-Top Exercise
 - Design, develop, and facilitate an engaging and realistic annual Table-Top Exercise (TTX) for the spring RRT3 meeting. The TTX scenario will simulate a complex incident requiring the establishment of an Incident-Specific RRT to address potential FOSC/OSC issues. The exercise should incorporate RRT involvement in response efforts, with a focus on decision-making, communication, coordination, and resource allocation.
 - Develop discussion-based questions that stimulate active participation and critical thinking among participants.
 - Incorporate relevant policies, procedures, and best practices into the TTX.
 - Provide a clear set of objectives and expected outcomes for the TTX.
 - Following the exercise, compile an After-Action Report (AAR) that identifies strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable recommendations

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- Conduct and Evaluate Annual RRT3 Notification and Activation Drills.
 - Conduct an annual, unannounced RRT3 notification drill to assess the effectiveness of the notification system and communication protocols.
 - Conduct an annual activation drill where RRT3 members call in for a drill response for an incident specific response scenario. The drill should simulate a real-world incident requiring rapid activation of the RRT3.
 - Evaluate the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of the notification and/or activation processes. Identify any bottlenecks or areas for improvement in the notification system.
 - Document the results of the drill and develop recommendations for enhancing the notification process.

Objective: Proactively identify and facilitate training and exercise opportunities that strategically enhance planning, preparedness, and response capabilities for incidents involving oil, hazardous substances, and all hazards, aligning with the RRT3's mission and goals.

- Maintain Microsoft Form for RRT members to share training and exercise opportunities.
- Maintain a list of all training available to RRT partners posted on the RRT3 website.

Cultural, Historic, Environmental, and Resources Workgroup

Objective: Develop Cultural Resource Guidance tools and training materials to support Federal OSCs.

- Finalize Unanticipated Discovery Guide and Tools.
 - Identify tools that may be beneficial to OSCs and stakeholders in the event of an Unanticipated Discovery.
 - Create a practical, step-by-step guide and accompanying tools that will meet the needs identified above (e.g., checklists, flowcharts, reporting templates) for OSCs to manage unanticipated discoveries of cultural resources during emergency responses.
 - Work with cultural resource experts (e.g., archaeologists, historians, Tribal representatives) to ensure accuracy and practicality.
 - Collect feedback from OSCs after they use the guide in the field.
 - Finalize the guides and tools for review by [October 31, 2025].
- Finalize National Historic Preservation Act Guidance.
 - Develop a clear, concise, and user-friendly guidance document explaining the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) as they apply to emergency planning and response per the Programmatic Agreements on protection of historic properties during emergency repose under the national oil and hazardous substances pollution contingency plan.
 - Identify tools that may be beneficial to OSCs and stakeholders related to NHPA compliance (e.g., definition of terms, examples of exemptions, etc)

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- Finalize guidance for review by March 27, 2026

Objective: RCP notification procedures

- Update and/or create procedures for when natural resource trustee agencies must be notified by an OSC/RPM as required by the NCP.
- Finalize the procedures for review by October 31, 2025

Objective: Streamline the consultation process for Federal agencies by pre-identifying specific categories of activities or projects that have minimal or no potential to affect historic properties, thereby excluding them from mandatory consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) or similar regulatory frameworks.

- Identify and document specific categories of activities or projects that consistently have *no* or *minimal* potential to affect historic properties.
- Develop clear and legally sound MOUs/MOA/PAs with relevant stakeholders (State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), Tribes, and other agencies) that define specific categories of activities or projects that will be excluded from mandatory consultation.
- Engage with SHPOs, THPOs, Tribes, and other relevant stakeholders to review the draft MOU/MOA to build consensus and address any concerns.
- Obtain legal review.

Information Management & Outreach (IMO) Workgroup

Objective: Develop standard schema for GIS based response plan products to facilitate better information sharing.

- Review 2025 survey results and identify existing commonalities with GIS platforms and terminology
 - Develop initial schema based on existing usage and commonalities
- Build 'test case' project utilizing GRP development to illustrate how standard schema makes communicating across agencies and platforms simpler and more efficient
- Regroup with RRT members to finalize schema for future projects

Objective: Facilitate / Continue ongoing IMO Working Group Projects

- Review and update IMO membership annually
- Review documents and materials on RRT website for retention times and remind workgroups and organizations to update/maintain their materials
- Ensure RRT membership is familiar with website usage

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Spill Response Countermeasures (SRC) Workgroup

Objective: Develop/refine response countermeasure strategies to assist the response community for spill response.

- Develop procedures and protocols for an expedited request, review, and approval process for the operational use of dispersants within RRT3, to include use of existing guidance for required environmental emergency consultations. Development of these protocols is intended to replace the existing RRT3 Pre-authorization MOU for use of COREXIT, which will no longer be authorized and thus the existing MOU will be devolved in accordance with Subpart J requirements as of 12 December 2025.

CONCURRENCE:


KELLY THORKILSON, USCG CO-CHAIR

1/8/2026
DATE


MICHAEL TOWLE, EPA CO-CHAIR

1/13/2026
DATE