

CHECKLIST: VESSEL GROUNDING OR SINKING RESPONSE

This checklist was developed as an aid to protect wildlife during vessel groundings and sinkings. It can be found in Section 9740.3.5 of the Wildlife Protection Guidelines for Oil Spill Response in Alaska (WPG).

1. Preventing Rat Introduction on Alaska's Rat-Free Islands (see Section 3630.1 of the WPG):

Does the stricken vessel have rats on board, or has it ever tied up at a port that has rats? (See [Figure 1](#) and [Table 1.](#))

NO

YES → Is the vessel near a rat-free location, especially in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge or the Pribilof Islands ([Table 2](#))?

NO

YES → Notify Unified Command

→ Notify Liaison Officer

→ Notify USFWS Oil Spill Response Coordinator (907-242-6893, fwsakspillresponse@fws.gov)

2. ENTANGLEMENT (see Section 3630.2 of the WPG):

2.a. Are there nets, lines (including anchor lines), or other gear in the water?

NO

YES → Describe the type, size, and deployment details:

Nets: What type? How large? Are they fully deployed? _____

Lines: How long? Anchor, long-line, baited? _____

Pots: Long-line pots or standard? _____

→ Is the deployed gear attached to the vessel?

NO

YES

2.b. Is there non-deployed gear (out of the water) that could become an entanglement issue if the vessel capsizes or sinks?

NO

YES → Describe as completely as possible:

3. DISPOSAL OF ON-BOARD CATCH (see Section 3630.3 of the WPG):

3.a. Does oiled fish or seafood need to be disposed of?

NO

YES → Notify Unified Command; oil-contaminated catch may not be disposed of in the water; it must be disposed of in permitted landfills, at disposal facilities outside of Alaska, or other locations approved by ADEC.

3.b. Does unholed catch need to be disposed of in water because it is spoiled or because it is causing vessel instability?

- NO
- YES → Notify Unified Command.
 - Consult with NMFS, USFWS, and ADF&G to avoid disposing of catch in a manner that could attract or sicken wildlife.
 - If disposal is proposed in ocean waters, as defined under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA), 33 USC 1402(b),¹ contact EPA Alaska Operations Office, (907) 271-5083. Permitting exclusions may apply, depending on disposal location.
 - If disposal is proposed in state waters shoreward of the baseline,² verbal or written authorization is required from the ADEC Environmental Health Division. If disposal is proposed in state waters seaward of the baseline, verbal or written authorization is required from the ADEC Environmental Health Division and EPA. Contact ADEC at (907) 269-7681.

4. INVASIVE SPECIES OTHER THAN RATS (see Section 3630.4 of the WPG):

4.a. Is there a potential for other invasive species to be on board (e.g., in ballast water, on hulls, in cargo)?

- NO
- YES → Consult with NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, and ADF&G on possible exposure pathways and species (see the ADF&G [Invasive Species](#) webpage).

5. OTHER IMPACTS (see Section 3630.5 of the WPG):

5.a. Will the vessel be removed, salvaged, or scuttled?

- NO
- YES → Notify Unified Command.
 - Contact EPA if scuttling is proposed in MPRSA-defined ocean waters (see the EPA [Disposal of Vessels at Sea](#) webpage).
 - Scuttling a vessel may also require USCG and ADEC approval or permits.
 - Consult with NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, and ADF&G for mitigation measures to minimize impacts to wildlife and sensitive habitats.

5.b. Is there fish or seafood on board?

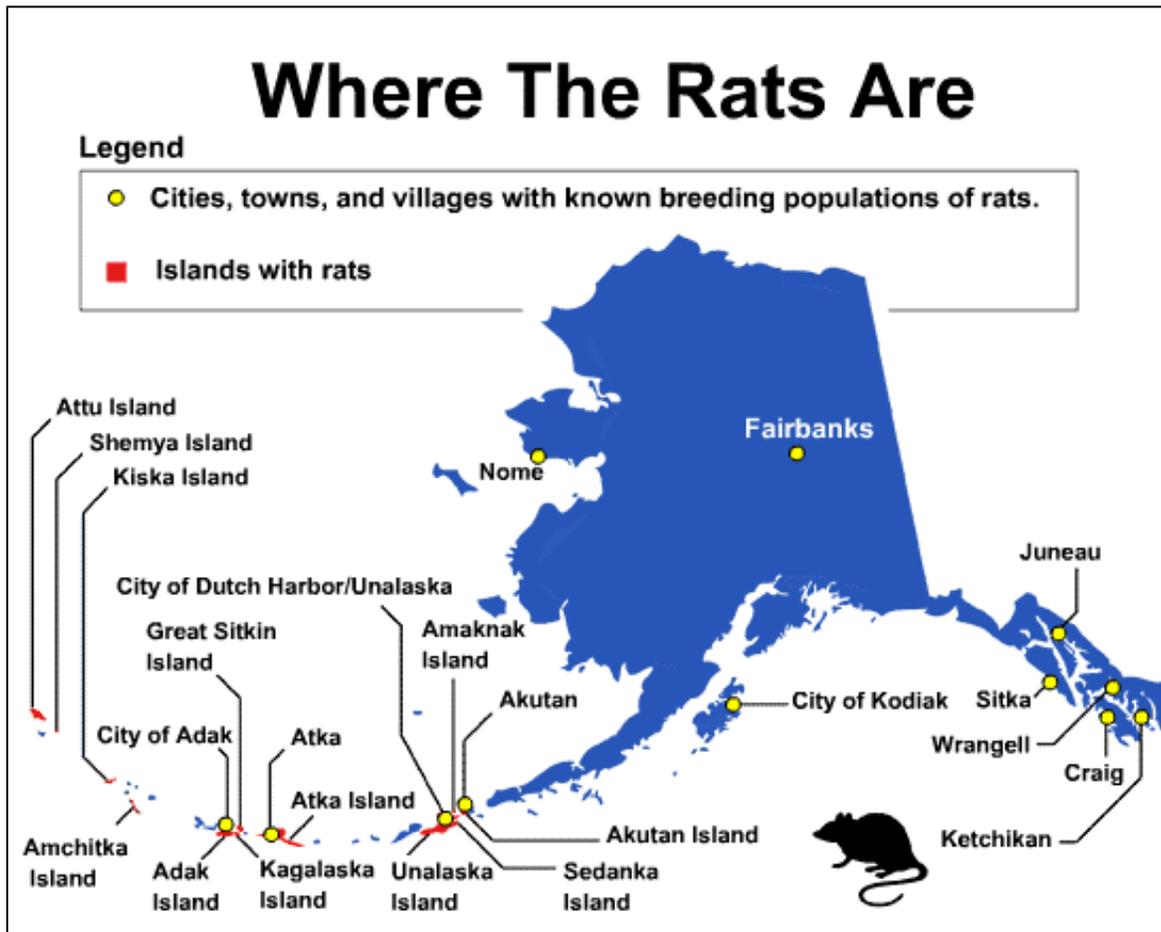
- NO
- YES → Return to Question 3, above.

Please return completed *Vessel Grounding or Sinking Response Checklist* to the wildlife agencies (see Initial Emergency Contacts section of the WPG).

¹ “Ocean waters” means those waters of the open seas lying seaward of the “baseline” from which the territorial sea is measured, as provided for in the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (15 UST 1606; TIAS 5639).

² Generally, the baseline is the mean lower low water line (ordinary low water mark) along the coast, or “closing lines” that are depicted on maps across river mouths and openings of bays. The NOAA maintains data for maritime boundaries, including closing lines and state and federal waters, and can be viewed on the [NOAA Baseline](#) ArcGIS Online Map Viewer.

Figure 1: Location of Known Breeding Populations of Rats in Alaska.*



* NOTE: As of 2020, there was no evidence of a breeding population of rats in Fairbanks. Rat Island in the western Aleutian Islands is now rat free. Source: ADF&G [Invasive Species – Norway Rat \(*Rattus norvegicus*\)](#) webpage and ADF&G [Alaska Fish & Wildlife News](#), December 2020.

Table 1: Cities, Towns, and Villages in Alaska with Known Breeding Populations of Rats.

City, Town, or Village			
Adak	Craig	Juneau	Nome
Akutan	Dutch Harbor/Unalaska	Ketchikan	Sitka
Atka	Fairbanks	Kodiak	Wrangell

Table 2: Islands in the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Known to Have Rats. All other islands in the Alaska Maritime NWR should be considered to be rat-free.

Fox Islands	Andreanof Islands	“Rat” Islands	Near Islands
Unalaska	Adak	Kiska	Attu
Amaknak	Great Sitkin	Amchitka	Shemya
Akutan	Kagalaska		
Sedanka	Atka		