



More Than 30,000  
Environmental Emergencies  
Occur Each Year

**Are You Ready?**

National Response System



Leadership. Partnerships. Solutions.



# The National Response System

Each year, our environment and communities are threatened by more than 30,000 hazardous chemical releases, oil discharges, and other toxic spills. The National Response System (NRS) ensures that these threats are effectively managed through its network of people, plans, and resources. The NRS is comprised of federal, state, and local governments that work together to protect Americans from threats to our land, air, and water.

The NRS is described in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, or NCP, found in 40 C.F.R. Part 300.

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***The FOSC coordinates or directs on-scene response resources and efforts during a pollution incident.***



## Key Components of the National Response System

### Leadership

#### Federal On-Scene Coordinators (FOSCs)

The FOSC is a key player during an oil or hazardous chemical emergency. The FOSC coordinates or directs on-scene response resources and efforts during a pollution incident. Actions may include sampling and monitoring, controlling the source of the release, on-site treatment, and off-site waste disposal. The FOSC also oversees area planning and development/updates of Area Contingency Plans, provides access to the expertise of the NRS federal member agencies, and is a valuable source of support and information to the local response community. The FOSC is pre-designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for inland areas and by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) for coastal areas. There are more than 250 EPA and USCG FOSCs located throughout the U.S.

The Department of Defense and the Department of Energy provide FOSCs for hazardous substance pollution incidents at their facilities or under their jurisdiction.

#### Regional Response Teams (RRTs)

The RRTs ensure that the multi-agency resources and expertise of the NRS are available to support the FOSC as needed during a pollution incident. There are 13 RRTs, one for each of the ten EPA federal regions, plus one for Alaska, one

## Regional Response Teams (RRTs) (cont'd)

for the Caribbean, and one for Oceania. The RRTs are comprised of representatives from the 15 federal NRS member agencies, plus state representatives, and are co-chaired by the EPA and USCG. Each RRT develops a Regional Contingency Plan that describes the policies and procedures for a quick and effective response to pollution incidents. More detailed plans are developed at the sub-regional level by Area Committees and at the local level by Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs). The State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) supervises and appoints members to the LEPCs. Together, SERCs, LEPCs, and Area Committees ensure effective preparedness among all levels of government and between private sector and public response efforts.

## The National Response Team (NRT)

The NRT is comprised of the 15 federal member agencies of the NRS, each with responsibilities and expertise in various aspects of emergency response to pollution incidents. With nationwide responsibilities for interagency planning, policy, and coordination, the NRT ensures that the most valuable tool in an emergency — readiness — is available for pollution incidents of all sizes and kinds. Prior to an incident, the NRT provides policy guidance and assistance. During an incident, the NRT may be activated if needed to provide national-level advice and assistance, as well as access to member agency resources that could not be provided at the RRT level. The EPA serves as chair of the NRT, and the USCG serves as vice chair.

In addition to interagency coordination, the NRT also engages the private sector



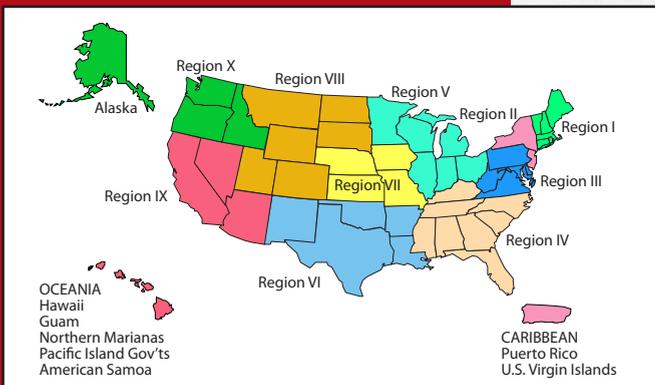
in prevention, preparedness, and response efforts. The NRT encourages innovation and collaboration to increase the effectiveness and reduce the cost of industry compliance with planning and response regulations. The NRT does not receive direct appropriations for its activities.

## The National Response Center (NRC)

The NRC is the communications core of the NRS. It is staffed 24 hours a day and receives more than 30,000 incident notifications each year. From these notifications, NRC watchstanders generate reports and relay them to the appropriate FOSCs and to the SERCs. Federal law requires the responsible party to report oil spills, gas and hazardous liquid pipeline releases, chemical releases, and radiological releases to the NRC.

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## Regional Response Teams



## Partnerships

One of the important features of the NRS is that no presidential declaration of a disaster is necessary to obtain federal support. A single phone call to the FOSC through the NRC allows immediate activation of the NRS.

## International Involvement

The NRT plays an advisory role during international incidents in responding to government-to-government requests for international preparedness and response assistance. The EPA and USCG, in consultation with the Department of State, have established joint inland and coastal contingency plans, respectively, with both Mexico and Canada to facilitate coordinated and integrated federal and international response to significant polluting incidents along shared boundaries. These joint plans also provide a mechanism for cooperative responses among all levels of government. At the request of the Co-chairs of the Canada-U.S. International Joint Advisory Team (IJAT) and the Mexico-U.S. Joint Response Team (JRT), the NRT serves in a consultative capacity if any of these joint contingency plans are activated. The IJAT and JRT are policy and advisory bodies with overall responsibility for the maintenance, coordination and implementation of these joint contingency plans. Moreover,

the NRT, in an advisory capacity, coordinates long-term preparedness, training, and response assistance to the Panama Canal Authority.

## National Response Framework

The National Response Framework (NRF) provides the overarching framework for coordinating federal, state, local, and private sector response efforts to domestic incidents. Under the NRF, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) coordinates federal response efforts for incidents requiring significant federal interaction, such as emergencies and disasters declared by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Act, and terrorist incidents. When the incident involves an actual or potential release of hazardous materials, DHS may activate an annex to the NRF called Emergency Support Function (ESF) #10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials Annex. The activation of ESF #10 brings the resources of the NRS to support the federal response. The FOSCs, RRTs, and NRT would function under ESF #10 as described elsewhere in this brochure.



***The NRS functions whenever there is a dangerous release, whether the incident is accidental or intentional.***

***The NRT and RRTs can access the key assets and capabilities of the 15 member agencies of the NRS to support other federal agencies, states, and local responders in their efforts to mitigate the danger to public health and the environment from a hazardous release.***

### **National Response Framework (cont'd)**

ESF #10 addresses environmental hazards from natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes. In addition, the NRS can provide critical assets to mitigate dangers to public health and the environment from terrorist incidents involving chemical, biological, and radiological materials, including weapons of mass destruction. The FOSCs, RRTs, and NRT actively participate in counterterrorism preparedness activities to help foster a coordinated federal, state, and local response.

### **Solutions**

#### **Logistical Support, Technical Assistance, Scientific Expertise, and Coordinating Capability**

Together, the 15 member agencies of the NRS provide solutions for effective response to a wide range of pollution incidents, both foreign and domestic.

In addition, each agency can provide access to technical assistance,

scientific expertise, logistical support, or coordination capabilities associated with its specific responsibilities and expertise. The NRT and RRTs coordinate planning and can access assets and capabilities of its member agencies to support FOSCs and state and local responders. The following are only a few examples of each NRS agency's capabilities.

#### ***Department of Agriculture (USDA)***

USDA's Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, and other agencies have personnel, laboratory, and field capabilities to evaluate, monitor, and control situations where natural resources, including soil, water, wildlife, and vegetation, have been impacted by hazardous substances and other natural or man-made emergencies. Further, the Forest Service offers additional equipment to the response effort.

#### ***Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)***

NOAA, through the Scientific Support Coordinators, provides scientific information and expertise to mitigate

the impacts of oil and hazardous substance releases on natural resources in coastal and navigable water areas. NOAA's expertise includes environmental chemistry, contaminant transport in air and water, weather forecasts, oceanographic conditions, marine fisheries, marine mammals, hydrographic surveys, geodetic positioning, satellite imagery, and high resolution digital aerial photography.





resource management responsibilities, DOI provides scientific expertise to FOSCs to help protect sensitive natural, recreational, and cultural resources and areas. DOI also provides experts on remote sensing; mapping (including GIS); surface and ground water contamination; contaminant transport; oil, gas, and mineral development; and oil spill response, and is available to facilitate environmental recovery.

### ***Department of Justice (DOJ)***

DOJ, in coordination with legal counsel of the federal agencies and departments involved, provides expert advice on legal questions arising during an incident. DOJ also represents the federal government in litigation relating to hazardous substance, oil, chemical, or biological releases. Through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), DOJ is the lead federal agency for the coordination of law enforcement and investigative activities in response to threats or acts of terrorism.

### ***Department of Labor (DOL)***

DOL's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has the responsibility and authority to ensure that response workers are protected and to determine if response sites are in compliance with safety and health standards. In this role, OSHA provides consultation and enforcement, as appropriate, and requires adequate training, controls, and personal protective equipment to ensure that responders are properly protected during a response.

### ***Department of Defense (DOD)***

For response to contaminant release incidents, DOD's Supervisor of Salvage & Diving, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear & High-Yield Explosives Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) have extensive expertise in containment, collection, and mitigation. This is in addition to DOD's National Guard capabilities, which can include a WMD Civil Support Team (CST) and a CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP).

### ***Department of Energy (DOE)***

DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration is ready to respond to any type of nuclear/radiological accident or incident domestically or internationally, including monitoring, assessment, and working with local,

state, and federal agencies and officials to resolve the situation.

### ***Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)***

HHS's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) provide worker health and safety training, while the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has established a surveillance system to evaluate the human health exposures to hazardous substances in emergencies. During an incident, CDC and ATSDR also advise the FOSC on human health threats and the prevention or mitigation of exposure to hazardous substances.

### ***Department of the Interior (DOI)***

Through its bureaus and offices, and based on its extensive land and

### ***Department of State (DOS)***

DOS coordinates international response and notification efforts when discharges or releases may affect international interests, including when they involve foreign flag vessels or threaten impact beyond U.S. jurisdiction. DOS also coordinates requests for NRS assistance from foreign governments.

### ***Department of Transportation (DOT)***

DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) manages national transportation safety programs for hazardous materials and oil by all modes of transportation and pipelines. In addition, the PHMSA provides technical assistance to the planning and response communities, including publication of the DOT Emergency Response Guidebook.

### ***Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)***

EPA provides FOSCs and coordinates preparedness and response for hazardous substance releases and oil discharges in the inland zone.

EPA has a number of special teams that can assist FOSCs, including the Environmental Response Team, National Decontamination Team, and Radiological Emergency Response Team. These Teams have highly trained scientists, engineers, and other technical experts who provide training and specialized assistance in multimedia sampling and analysis, hazards assessment, cleanup techniques, and waste management.

### ***General Services Administration (GSA)***

GSA provides logistical and telecommunications support during an incident. This support may include providing space, telephones, transportation, supplies, equipment, and procurement-related services.

### ***U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC)***

USNRC regulates civilian nuclear facilities and nuclear materials. USNRC is the lead federal agency during radiological events involving licensees and provides expertise during other radiological incidents.

### ***Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)***

FEMA, which is part of DHS, is the lead agency for administering financial and technical assistance during a Presidentially declared disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Act. FEMA is responsible for providing hazardous

materials response guidance and training for emergency first responders.

### ***U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)***

USCG reports directly to the Secretary of DHS. USCG provides FOSCs and coordinates government and industry activities for oil spills and hazardous substance releases in the coastal zone. The USCG National Strike Force provides specialized equipment and response personnel for oil spills and chemical releases, along with incident management expertise. USCG also develops and delivers exercise and training programs for the NRS. The National Pollution Funds Center is also part of the USCG, and administers the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund and the USCG's use of the Superfund and Disaster Relief funds for pollution response.

**For more information on the NRS, as well as preparedness and response tools, visit our web site at [www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org).**





Report Oil and Chemical Spills  
to the National Response Center  
**(800) 424-8802**

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[www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org)

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