

REGION I REGIONAL RESPONSE TEAM 2005 ANNUAL REPORT
Period of Report: January 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Mr. Joe Laforvara
Executive Director
National Response Team
USEPA Headquarters - MC 5104A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Laforvara:

As required by Section 300.115 of the National Contingency Plan, the Region I Regional Response Team Report is submitted for the period of January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005.

I. MAJOR ACTIVITIES

A. MAJOR/NOTEWORTHY RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

HURRICANE KATRINA:

Many Region I RRT agencies mobilized and continue to deploy personnel in support of the Hurricane Katrina response.

EPA Region I is heavily involved in assisting Region VI with the HAZMAT mission of reconnaissance and recovery in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita-affected areas along the Louisiana Gulf Coast. Initially stationed out of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) offices in Baton Rouge, EPA emergency response teams responded to requests for assistance from the Louisiana State Police, EPA and State reconnaissance teams, and local officials. Types of responses early on in the Katrina response included an assessment of hazmat railroad cars and responses to abandoned medical waste, flooded agricultural warehouses, and various leaking or displaced drums and containers of suspect materials. EPA Region I continues to cycle its employees to and from the affected region daily, while maintaining response and removal operational capacity in the New England Region. All EPA field operations are being managed under the Incident Command System (ICS).

The US Coast Guard and other member RRT I agencies were actively involved in the oil, HAZMAT, and other mission areas with numerous members deployed from Region I to the states affected by Hurricane Katrina and Rita. While the numbers of deployed personnel are decreasing, the Coast Guard and others still have personnel on-scene managing the ongoing HAZMAT removal/disposal.

INTERROYAL FIRE: At the request of CTDEP and the Plainfield, CT Fire Department, EPA responded to the scene of a fire at the InterRoyal Mill on Railroad Avenue in Plainfield, CT at 2110 hours on Tuesday, April 26, 2005 to provide air monitoring support. EPA integrated into

the Unified Command and conducted air monitoring and sampling for potential airborne asbestos fibers, lead, and particulate dust. EPA and CTDEP also conducted area reconnaissance and sampling to determine the extent of potentially-asbestos-contaminated debris which was transported downwind by the smoke plume.

Once firefighting activities were complete, EPA became the lead agency for emergency removal activities at the scene. EPA, with the support of CTDEP and local authorities, cleaned up asbestos-contaminated debris in the affected neighborhoods. The final phase of the response included demolition and sampling activities in the fire-damaged ruins of the building.

NANTUCKET LANDFILL FIRE: On Saturday, August 13, 2005 at 1700 hours, EPA responded to an on-going landfill fire on Nantucket Island to provide air monitoring support at the request of the local fire department and MADEP. USCG Sector Providence was notified of the situation and worked with EPA to have the Agency respond as the FOSC. EPA integrated into the Unified Command and conducted air monitoring and sampling for total particulates, hydrogen sulfide, hydrogen cyanide, volatile organic compounds, lead, and asbestos. Air monitoring results were reviewed by Unified Command, which included EPA, MADEP, the fire department, the PRP (Town of Nantucket), ATSDR, and the local Board of Health.

Approximately 45 homes located within a ten-mile radius of the landfill were impacted by the plume. Residents complained of respiratory difficulty and a decrease in air quality. The local hospital reported that 2 people had reported respiratory irritation, however, hospital officials were not certain that these cases were directly related to the fire.

EPA's presence on-site helped to accelerate the pace of the PRP's response, and the air monitoring data collected demonstrated that it was safe for the fire department to continue with their activities and that no evacuations or shelter-in-place actions were required. Following agreement among Unified Command that firefighting efforts at the landfill were effective and the plume greatly reduced, EPA collected one additional set of air sampling data on August 16, 2005, ceasing on-site operations that day.

B. RRT MEETINGS

SPRING: RRT I met on June 7 and 8, 2005 in New London, CT at the USCG Academy. The meeting was combined with the Region I Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) and focused largely on the lessons learned from the TOPOFF 3 exercise. On day three, RRT/RISC members, as well industry partners, participated in a National Communication System (NCS) seminar to discuss emergency communication systems available to responders.

FALL: On October 27, 2005, RRT I met in Portland, ME, and focused on the recent Hurricane Katrina and Rita response efforts from an environmental response perspective. The meeting was scheduled to immediately follow the Maine/New Hampshire Area Committee's Oil Spill seminar.

C. COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP UPDATES

SELECTION GUIDE WORKGROUP: The Selection Guide Work Group was established in Fall 2004 to develop a Volume II of the Oil Spill Response Technologies Selection Guide for Region 1. A work plan is being drafted for presentation for presentation to the RRT.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATION WORKGROUP: The Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultation Work Group, developed in 2002, completed the B-120 Buzzards Bay spill consultation earlier this year.

BOUNDARY REALIGNMENT WORKGROUP: The Boundary Realignment Workgroup has finished its deliberations and is not proposing any changes to the EPA/USCG jurisdictional response boundaries at this time. An agreement for transferring FOSC responsibility during a response has been developed and should be finalized as an amendment to the Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) in January 2006.

II. GENERAL PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

A. TRAINING

EPA's Radiation Training has been rescheduled for the spring of 2006 due to staff deployment to the Hurricane Katrina Response. The radiation training will focus on safety and equipment usage.

B. EXERCISES/WORKSHOPS

TOPOFF 3 (TOP OFFICIALS) EXERCISE: TOPOFF 3 was a five-day, full-scale exercise conducted 4-8 April 2005 at two state venues (CT and NJ), as well as with international partners (Canada and UK). TOPOFF-3 provided the Department of Homeland Security and other Federal departments and agencies with the first opportunity to test and validate the recently released National Response Plan (NRP) and to exercise protocols of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Over 200 federal, state, local, tribal, private sector, and international agencies and organizations, as well as volunteer groups participated in the exercise. The TOPOFF 3 exercise scenario included a biological agent incident in New Jersey, a chemical agent and high-yield explosive incident in Connecticut and the United Kingdom, and post-incident effects of biological incident in the United States and Canada. The Connecticut full-scale exercise scenario was a chemical attack using a sulfur mustard agent during a major waterfront festival. RRT1 participated in TOPOFF 3 in the Connecticut venue via conference call, providing advice and expertise to the FOSC for USCG Sector Long Island Sound. Activation and coordination between the FOSC, RRT, NRT and the JFO highlighted a need for clarification in particular NRT and JFO roles in supporting the FOSC and coordinating scientific and technical support to an FOSC during a response. When the FOSC requested national-level expert opinion and validation of current procedures regarding sulfur mustard detection, appropriate action levels, and decontamination, there was a debate as to whether this was best solved using personnel at or brought to the JFO, or whether the NRT should advise on this as was done with the Anthrax Technical Assistance Document.

9th ANNUAL NORTHEAST REGIONAL OIL SPILL SEMINAR: Sponsored by EPA, USCG, and the Maine/New Hampshire Area Committee, the focus of the October 25-26, 2005 seminar in Portland Main was a risk management perspective of the Northeast Oil Transportation System. Presentations were given on oil supply streams, vessel transport, terminal operations, and safety and environmental compliance.

US POSTAL SERVICE EXERCISE: On August 23, 2005 USPS conducted an exercise to test the notification and monitoring system for Anthrax in their Springfield, Massachusetts facility. The exercise was a success and identified some key concerns for future planning, including sample transportation, mass-decontamination, and notification.

COTP PROVIDENCE AREA PREP EXERCISE: The government-led PREP exercise scheduled for September, 2005 had to be postponed due to Hurricane Katrina response commitments of the Coast Guard and industry. The exercise has been rescheduled for the week of February 13th, 2006.

C. FEDERAL, STATE, and LOCAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION EFFORTS

AREA CONTINGENCY PLAN UPDATES: In 2005, USCG Area Contingency Plans were updated in accordance with guidance from USCG Headquarters. Three updates were made to the plans including: alignment with the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System, the addition of a list of scientists as required by the Chaffee Amendments, and conversion to ICS format. Further updates will be required within the next few years to improve the plans.

JOINT RESPONSE TEAM: The CANUSLANT biennial cross-border response exercise was held June 13-16, 2005 at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, ME. The exercise focused on "places of refuge" for at-risk vessels that pose a greater threat if they remain off-shore, rather than being brought into port. The exercise maintained a pollution focus, although some aspects of places of refuge for security reasons were discussed. The exercise consisted of four distinct phases: Education, Issue Group, Table Top, and Equipment Demonstration.

UNANNOUNCED DRILL PROGRAM: The EPA is actively conducting their unannounced drill program for oil/hazmat facilities in coordination with the USCG and States. EPA OSCs continue to conduct Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures/Facility Response Plan (SPCC/FRP) inspections at EPA's FRP bulk oil storage facilities and coordinate and conduct drills with the USCG for facilities located in the Coastal Zone.

REGIONAL INTERAGENCY STEERING COMMITTEE: A quarterly RISC meeting was held in conjunction with the spring RRT meeting June 7-8, 2005 in New London, CT. Discussions focused on the Top Officials 3 (TOPOFF3) exercise, Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) #8 – "National Preparedness," National Response Plan (NRP) implementation, and NORTHCOM roles and responsibilities in emergency responses.

III. PERSONNEL CHANGES/ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

CAPT Mark VanHaverbeke, USCG Region I and II Response Team Co-Chair, retired on May 20, 2005. CAPT Mary Landry assumed the role of USCG RRT Co-Chair until December 1, 2005, when the First District office reorganized to ensure field-to-headquarters vertical alignment. The Co-Chair responsibility now resides with the First District Chief of the Response Division, CAPT Mark Landry. CAPT Roy Nash assumed the duties of USCG FOOSC from CAPT Mary Landry in June of 2005. Mr. David Sait, Maine DEP, retired this year. The primary representative for the State of Maine is now Ms. Barbara Parker, Maine DEP.


IV. ISSUES OR OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS REQUIRING NRT ATTENTION


Although many Region I responders have gained valuable experience in TOPOFF 3 and the Hurricane Katrina response, the New England response community does not yet have much real-world experience in the implementation of ESF #10 procedures in Region 1 under FEMA. The potential for a natural disaster to affect multiple New England states is large, specifically an event requiring multiple states to coordinate ESF #10 responses with their own individual Joint Field Office (JFO). Additional work is needed to complete a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for ESF #10 coordination in New England. Region I could benefit from assistance from the NRT in pre-planning for those easily-identifiable issues that will arise if ESF #10 is activated, such as funding and cost-share issues. Pre-scripted Mission Assignments can be developed to aide the activation process. The RRTs and NRT need to continue to work to define their specific roles and responsibilities during a response to an Incident of National Significance (INS) under the NRP.

V. FUTURE PLANS

NEXT RRT I MEETING: The spring Region I meeting is tentatively scheduled for April of 2006. Location and date are still to be determined. The fall Region I meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 19, 2006 in Portland, Maine.

VI. CONCURRENCE


_____, 1/17/06
Mr. Arthur V. Johnson, III (Date)
EPA Co-Chair
U.S. EPA, Region I


_____, 1/11/06
Captain Mark Landry (Date)
U.S. Coast Guard Co-Chair
First Coast Guard District