

Mr. Mike Faulkner
National Response Team
USEPA Headquarters
OEM/MC 5104A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Faulkner

Section 300.115 of the National Contingency Plan requests that Regional Response Teams (RRT) provide letter reports to the NRT, summarizing recent activities, organizational changes, operational concerns, and efforts to improve state and local coordination. This Caribbean RRT (CRRT) report is submitted for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2012.

Executive Summary: The CRRT does not have any Challenges, Lessons Learned or Best Practices to share at this time from incidents or activities in the region this past year. Several significant issues arose and were addressed during the response to the M/V JIREH grounding, but due to the postponement of the Fall CRRT meeting due to Hurricane Sandy, the CRRT has not yet conducted an after-action discussion of the incident. The lessons learned and best practices observed during that response will be reviewed and discussed during the 2013 semi-annual CRRT meetings.

I. MAJOR ACTIVITIES

A. Major/Noteworthy Response Activities

- **Metalor Ammonia Release; Luquillo, PR** - In March 2012, a Police Department investigation at this abandoned facility revealed the presence of two ammonia tanks with storage capacities of 8,000 and 10,000 gallons. The site is located within an industrial park, and approximately 6,000 persons live within 1/4 mile of the site's perimeter, which was not fully secured. There was evidence throughout the site of vagrants entering and dismantling windows and metallic structures. On July 17, 2012, after several months awaiting the arrival of a 10,000 gallon mobile container from the US, local, state and federal government representatives met to discuss the contingency actions to be taken during a planned transfer of the ammonia from the tanks. It was discovered during this site visit that an active uncontrollable ammonia release was taking place from both tanks' valves. An immediate response action was taken to address the release, until the planned transfer of ammonia could commence. On July 19, 2012, the transfer of ammonia from the 0,000 gallon tank began, and concluded on July 20th without incident.

- **M/V MSC IDIL** - On May 11, 2012, MSC IDIL, a 900' Panamanian flagged container ship, experienced an explosion 60 nautical miles north of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The explosion resulted in several punctures in the vessel's hull below the waterline and extensive flooding. Following the incident, the container ship began listing as water flooded into a fuel tank and cargo compartment. The MSC IDIL had 588,000 gallons of fuel oil and 62,000 gallons of diesel on board. The Sector San Juan Incident Management Team worked closely with the commercial salvage team hired by MSC to ensure the safety of the crew and the environment. It took approximately 2 weeks for the vessel to complete its repairs and continue its journey, with no pollution incidents.
- **M/V JIREH** - On June 21, 2012, the M/V JIREH, 202' Honduran flagged freighter vessel, ran hard aground on the southwest side of Mona Island, a state natural reserve located 40 miles west of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The 6 crewmembers and 78 passengers onboard were Haitian, and reported that they were transiting from Port-au-Prince, Haiti to St. Martin to transport their cargo (mangos, feed grain, nuts, cement blocks, beer, water, and energy drinks). The M/V JIREH was in a significant state of disrepair. The M/V JIREH's poor structural integrity, including its free communication with the ocean, significant volume of oil onboard, and its location in arguably the most environmentally sensitive location in Puerto Rico and much of the Caribbean represented a substantial pollution threat to the environment and navigable waters of the United States.

In the absence of a viable Responsible Party, U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan opened the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund and Superfund and established a Unified Command to manage the response. The Unified Command included representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER), and the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board. An Environmental Unit was also established as part of the Incident Management Team, with representatives from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and DNER. The Environmental Unit was led by the NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC).

The first phase of the response, from June 21 to August 1, 2012, included removal of gross quantities of oil and hazardous materials from the M/V JIREH. The second phase of response operations, from August 2 to October 6, 2012, included vessel removal operations. The initial plan to complete vessel removal and disposal was to temporarily refloat the vessel, tow it to approximately 12 nm south of Mona Island, and scuttle it in deep water. After the passing of Tropical Storm Ernesto, the M/V JIREH's condition deteriorated to the point where the vessel could not be refloated without removing part of the superstructure to lighten the vessel and reduce the ground force reaction, and install roller bags to increase the vessel's buoyancy. An attempt to refloat the vessel was made on

September 6, 2012, but failed. The vessel proved to be entrenched in her grounding location and, when she was pulled upon simultaneously by the on-scene tug vessel and a 100 ton lift crane, the tow lines sheared through three of M/V JIREH's structural frames. At this point, the decision was made to move forward with vessel removal by cutting up the M/V JIREH in-situ and disposing of the pieces via a scrap facility in Puerto Rico. On October 6, 2012, the final sections of the M/V JIREH were removed from Mona Island. The total direct costs to the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund were approximately \$14 million.

- **Lagos Dos Bocas Oil Spill; Utuado, PR** - On July 26th, 2012, a sheen was observed at the recreational area of Lago Dos Bocas, a reservoir constructed by the PR Electric and Power Authority (PREPA). The primary purpose of the recreation area is to transport guests to restaurants which line the lake and are only accessible by boat. The reservoir provides both hydro-electric power for PREPA and water supply for PRASA. The intake for the turbines is at the dam, which was about 500 yards from the sheen). The gates are open when there is a power requirement, or when PRASA requires water. The sheen - approximately 150 feet from the boat launch - appeared in the location of a large vessel which had sunk 20-30 years ago. PRASA initiated increased analyses for constituents of diesel to protect the water supply, and notified USCG and local agencies.

USCG personnel on scene determined the location was within EPA's jurisdiction. EPA was notified on Friday, July 27th, 2012 and an OSC from CEPD was mobilized to the scene that day. Based upon EPA's assessment, an oil spill removal action was initiated, and an FPN was obtained from the NPFC. EPA's ERRS contractor was issued a Task Order to respond with a dive team.

On July 28th, an OSC from EPA's Edison office and ERRS mobilized to the scene and assumed responsibility from CEPD. The dive team assessed the sunken vessel, which was approximately 65 feet long. It was presumed that the vessel contained two large fuel tanks; however, the vessel was covered by a thick layer of sediment, which made it difficult to ascertain the integrity and location of the fuel tanks. Two manhole covers, thought to be access points for periodic cleaning of each of the two fuel tanks, were missing. The vessel was listing to one side, and it was suspected that pockets of fuel were trapped above the manholes. From July 29th to August 6th, the dive team cleared the collapsed cabin to gain better access to the deck.

On August 6th, a second oil leak was detected on Lagos Dos Bocas from a nearby beached vessel, which was confirmed to be a sister vessel to the submerged vessel. This vessel was partially submerged and leaking oil from the engine compartment and possibly the fuel tank. Water levels in the reservoir were lowered in order to provide better access to the sister ship. An excavator was brought in to remove contaminated silt and sediments, and the engine and fuel tank were removed.

With the sister ship accessible, measurements were taken to use as a template for further dive operations on the original sunken vessel, to better facilitate the location of its fuel tank and engine compartment. On August 7th, two hot-taps were made into the fuel, and sufficient volume was pumped out to ensure all potential fuel was removed. On August 9th, the dive team secured the valves of the two hot-taps, completing removal operations on the sunken vessel.

B. CRRT Meetings

- May 8-10, 2012, St Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The Fall 2012 CRRT meeting was postponed due to on-going disaster response activities by several CRRT members and participants following Hurricane Sandy. The meeting has been rescheduled for April 16-18, 2013 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

C. Committee and Working Group Updates

- NSTR

II. GENERAL PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

A. Training: Sector San Juan did not host any significant training during the year, but members from the Incident Management Division attended NOAA's Science of Oils Spills course and the FO SCR "C" school in Yorktown.

B. Exercises and Workshops:

- **FEMA All-Hazards Plan and Earthquake/Tsunami Annexes** – On March 14, 2012, the initial draft of the FEMA Region II All-Hazards Plan (AHP) was validated with a table-top exercise, to test the response mechanisms to provide Federal support to the Region's jurisdictions. Several CRRT member agencies participated in the exercise, conducted in NYC.

On March 28-29, several CRRT member agencies participated in a TTX held at the University of the Virgin Islands campus on St. Thomas to evaluate the earthquake and tsunami annexes to the FEMA Region 2 All-Hazards Plan. Another TTX was held on April 26-27 in Puerto Rico, to evaluate the Earthquake and Tsunami annexes for the commonwealth.

USCG Exercises Conducted - For 2012, USCG was originally scheduled to participate in an Industry led exercise. Due to the M/V JIREH grounding, USCG is in the process of completing the After Action Report and putting together the request for real world event credit.

Non-USCG Exercises – Other than the above-referenced FEMA exercises, USCG did not participate in any non-USCG exercises during the period of this report.

C. Federal, State, and Local Planning and Coordination Issues Efforts

- Sector San Juan conducted Area Committee meetings on 29FEB12 in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, and on 07MAY12 in St. Thomas, USVI

D. Major Best Practices from Responses, Trainings, Exercises/Workshops and other RRT Activities:

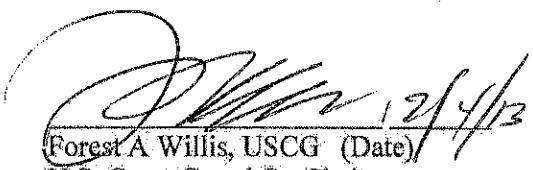
- NSTR

III. PERSONNEL CHANGES/ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

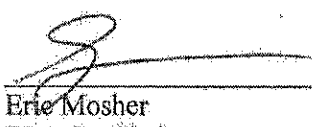
Mr. Forest Willis, USCG, has assumed the Coast Guard Co-Chair position from CAPT Todd Lutes. CAPT Lutes will continue as the alternate Co-Chair. The Coast Guard RRT Coordinator position is currently vacant and being advertised.

IV. ISSUES OR OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS REQUIRING NRT ATTENTION

- Funding for Federal and Commonwealth/Territorial agencies for travel to attend CRRT meetings, workshops and training continues to be problematic.



Forest A Willis, USCG (Date) 12/4/12
U.S. Coast Guard Co-Chair
Seventh Coast Guard District



Eric Mosher (Date) 1/31/13
EPA Co-Chair
US EPA, Region 2