

Ms. Lisa Boynton
Interim Executive Director
National Response Team
USEPA Headquarters
OEM/MC 5104A
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Ms. Boynton:

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, 2015.

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.

I. MAJOR ACTIVITIES

A. Major/Noteworthy Response Activities

R/V AUBI Grounding; Arecibo, PR: The 49'AUBI ran hard aground within Cuevo Del Indio on 14MAY15 , damaging a significant amount of coral, which included listed endangered species within a Marine Protected Area and Natural Marine Reserve. The 18-hour response resulted in the successful removal of an estimated 1,500 gallons of diesel fuel from the vessel which was held in integrated hull/tanks, which were 3/16" inches thick. The response efforts were restricted by limited access from the nearest road and lack of light during nighttime fuel removal operations. The lightened aluminum vessel was extracted safely at high tide the following day with no loss of structural integrity or further damage to the nearby corals. The collaboration with local, commonwealth, and federal agencies, including volunteers, were outstanding and continued throughout the coral reef rehabilitation process at grounding site.

Hormigueros Pyrotechnics Site; Hormigueros, PR - On May 26th 2015, a fire and explosion occurred at an illegal pyrotechnics storage warehouse in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) attributed the cause of the fire to an improper installation that may have influenced the overload, arcing and causing the molten material to be expelled. Within 100 yards of the warehouse was a large residential development, as well as a large supermarket. An unnamed stream directly across the street from the warehouse receives storm water discharges, and is a tributary to another unnamed stream; at the confluence of which a school of large fish was observed.

The warehouse was divided into three bays and suffered significant damage, particularly the middle bay which housed the illegal pyrotechnics. Approximately 100 cubic yards of ash from the fire was stockpiled in the middle bay, which no longer had a roof or side and front walls, posing the potential for the ash to migrate through wind and tropical rainfalls. There was the potential of heavy metals such as barium, copper, lead, strontium and lithium being present in the ash.

EPA obtained a written access agreement from property title holder on June 16th, 2015, and collected samples on June 17th. The results indicated elevated levels of copper and barium. The ERRS crew mobilized to Puerto Rico on August 9th. Roll-off containers were delivered to the site on August 10th, and the selected industrial landfill obtained commonwealth approvals to accept the waste from the site that afternoon. Off-site shipment began on August 11th, and all on-site operations were completed on August 12th.

Additional information can be found at <http://epaossc.org/HormiguerosPyrotechnics>

SACRIFICIO II Grounding; Mona Island, PR: The M/V SACRIFICIO II ran aground on 05JULY15 in the vicinity of Playa de Pajaro on Mona Island, the largest Marine Protected Area in Puerto Rico. The 32-ton, 50ft vessel had broken free of its moorings nearby and settled on shore with an estimated 325 gallons of diesel on board. SSJ IMD expedited notifications to local, commonwealth, and Federal Agencies while following best management practices to safely remove the vessel. SSJ IMD's clear direction, oversight, and hands-on approach, were key to assisting the responsible party with successfully extracting the vessel with no environmental impacts or structural damage. The efforts of the agencies involved were instrumental in the response to such an isolated and environmentally sensitive location.

Grounded Vessel, Fajardo, PR: The 40' abandoned R/V was discovered hard aground in Fajardo, PR, in the wake of Tropical Storm Erika in August. The vessel was found listing 25 degrees to starboard on a shallow reef in approx. 3 ft of water and in moderate wave action. SSJ IMD could not locate any identifiable markings or a responsible party leading to the utilization of the OSLTF to conduct a pollution potential assessment and removal/disposal operations. SSJ IMD completed the 3-day, \$18,850.00 response effort, successfully removing 150 gallons of diesel from the vessel. Removal actions were tidally limited and operational windows were minimal.

B. CRRT Meetings - Agendas and presentations from the meetings identified below are posted on the CRRT website.

- June 9-11, 2015; St. Thomas, USVI
- December 8-10, 2015; Caguas, Puerto Rico.

C. Committee and Working Group Updates

- Sector San Juan conducted its quarterly Area Contingency Committee meeting in conjunction with the December semi-annual CRRT meeting.
- The Area Committee is working to establish a Volunteer Coordination Section for the ACP.
- USCG is working with NOAA and FWS to add a Coral Reef Relocation section to the ACP.

CRRT Chemical Facility Safety and Security Committee

On June 9th, the CRRT Chemical Facility Safety and Security Committee held a face-to-face meeting on St. Thomas, USVI, in conjunction with the semi-annual CRRT meeting. We discussed the work and reporting structure for the committee's efforts, and the formation of workgroups to address the 11 SOPs that have been identified for implementation.

The Caribbean Region Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Chemical Facility Safety and Security were published in August 2015.

As part of its implementation efforts under the EO, EPA met with DPNR to identify ways to assist USVI in identifying EPCRA Tier II non-filers. During those meetings, DPNR briefed EPA on their implementation procedures to manage Tier II information. As of March 1, 2015, DPNR switched to an electronic Tier II submittal system which is expected make database management even more effective.

Also as a result of the EO implementation efforts, EPA and DPNR conducted approximately 15 joint inspections in the USVI in both 2014 and 2015 at operating facilities to check for possible EPCRA non-filers. Through these joint efforts, additional facilities have been identified as non-filers and have subsequently submitted their chemical inventory information to DPNR. EPA plans to continue joint EPCRA inspections with DPNR, as well as SPCC and FRP inspections at oil facilities.

II. GENERAL PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

A. Training:

- Sector San Juan conducted an Equipment Deployment exercise, ICS-300, IMSS, and CART training during the period of this report.
- Sector San Juan had a visit from the USCG IMAT to assist in ICS training and qualifications for the Full Scale Prep exercise.

B. Exercises and Workshops:

- On August 6th, Sector San Juan and MSD St. Thomas exercised the OPA 90 equipment trailer and response boom in St. Thomas to maintain a capable and effective preparedness posture for pollution response. This also provided training to Sector San Juan/ MSD St. Thomas response personnel involved in deploying the boom. Training was conducted with local contractors this provided a more proactive versus reactive response for future responses.
- USCG Exercises conducted during the period of this report included an OPA 90 Equipment Deployment Exercise; quarterly GIUE's and Notification Drills; and a Full Scale PREP exercise in September.

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

- On September 10, 2015, the CRRT received a letter from the US Fish and Wildlife Service stating that given the existing conservation measures in the CRRT's current plans and policy, as well as the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs), the service continues to concur with the CRRT that its Dispersant Use Plan, In-Situ Burning Plan, and the use of solidifiers are not likely to adversely affect listed species under their purview.
- On October 6, 2015, the CRRT Co-Chairs submitted a request for reinitiation of consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), on the potential use of dispersants and in-situ burning in waters of the Caribbean region. The Co-Chairs also requested the initiation of an essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation pursuant to the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA).

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

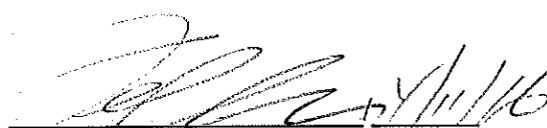
- Planning the Area Committee Meetings in conjunction with the CRRT Meetings greatly improved the overall attendance.

III. PERSONNEL CHANGES/ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

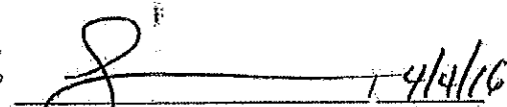
- LCDR Michael Vega replaced LCDR Daniel Cruz as the Chief of Planning for Sector San Juan.
- LT Quinton DuBose replaced LT Domingo Acevedo as the Deputy Chief of Planning at the Sector.

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.
- The Sector continues to struggle with obtaining consistent local participation at AC meetings.



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



Eric Mosher (Date)
EPA Co-Chair
US EPA, Region 2