

Regional Response Team (RRT) Annual Report

Region:	Caribbean	Calendar Year:	2022
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A. Annual Meetings – *No CRRT meetings were conducted in Calendar Year 2022*

	Dates	Location	# of Attendees	Website for presentations
1.				

B. Activations / Notifications	
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Dates:		July-August 2022	Event:	St. Croix Sargassum	ACT		NOT	X
Issue / Concern:		Accumulation of Sargassum impacting VI Water & Power Authority's (WAPA) Estate Richmond Desalination and Power Plants						
Agencies Involved:		EPA, FEMA, USACE, USCG, DOE, VITEMA, DPNR, WAPA						
1.	Decisions Made:		<p>On 7/24/22, EPA received a Mission Assignment (MA) to support ESF-3 at the FEMA Region 2 RRCC (virtually), and the Interim Operating Facility (IOF) in St. Croix. EPA arrived on island on 7/25 and reported to the IOF. The OSC met with representatives from DPNR to determine their priorities for this incident, and how EPA could assist. The OSC participated in FEMA coordination and operations meetings and met with WAPA as well. EPA provided technical assistance regarding options for the potential removal of sargassum material, and steps that could be taken to clear the material from water intakes that impact both the Estate Richmond desalination plant and power plant. EPA also conducted preliminary air monitoring with a hand-held meter. EPA noted some elevated hydrogen sulfide (H2S) readings on the sargassum-impacted beach closest to WAPA's water intake, and provided this information to FEMA and WAPA. The REOC worked with the Regional Air Program regarding permitting issues at WAPA that were being impacted by the sargassum event. Additionally, EPA provided virtual support to the ESF-3 (Infrastructure) desk at the FEMA RRCC.</p> <p>On 07/28, the OSC toured the WAPA plant with the FEMA FCO, DOE, USCG, USACE and VITEMA so that the technical team could get a better understanding of the situation. While the current wind pattern had pushed the sargassum to the beaches and away from the water intakes, there was concern that the conditions could change at any moment and cause issues at the water intakes once again. There is currently no accurate tracking of sargassum movement.</p> <p>On 07/29, the OSC reported that conditions at the beach had improved. FEMA was exploring courses of action that could be taken if the intakes/beaches were inundated with sargassum again. FEMA considered having EPA, or outside contractors, conduct air monitoring at the beach perimeter during the removal of sargassum. FEMA made preparations to bring in tanker trucks of water to the island if the desalination plant became impacted from the sargassum. The OSC worked with FEMA to determine testing protocols for the water being received for distribution. The OSC also coordinated with FEMA on the potential utilization of 2 deep water wells on the island. The OSC continued to coordinate with ECAD and WAPA with regards to any air pollutant exceedances.</p> <p>The OSC worked with FEMA and USACE to develop an SOW, including booming strategies, for sargassum removal, and evaluated permitting issues with DPNR that could arise from this task, such as impacts to sea turtles and other wildlife. Disposal of the sargassum at sea was determined to not be a feasible option due to ocean dumping regulations as well as logistics. The OSC contacted ERT regarding NIOSH requirements for personal monitoring equipment for the workers who would be removing the</p>					

		<p>sargassum from the beach. On 8/03, the OSC reported that the sargassum influx had improved and that the hydrogen sulfide levels had decreased around the beach perimeter. EPA continued to provide FEMA guidance on air and water regulatory matters.</p> <p>As of 8/08, FEMA informed the OSC it was determined to be more economically beneficial for the USVI to purchase the necessary air monitoring equipment than to pay a cost share for EPA to perform air monitoring. FEMA requested that the territory inventory their existing air monitoring equipment and maintenance capability. The USVI will pursue a DHS grant to obtain funding to obtain the equipment and expertise. EPA's role will be to provide technical assistance to the USVI in the acquisition, use and deployment of their own air monitoring equipment.</p> <p>As of 08/10, the OSC reported that FEMA and USACE were considering two short term actions - installing a bubbler screen in front of the water intake and placing a boom diagonally on the eastern side of the pier - to prevent sargassum from reaching the intake. These actions may become long term actions if successful. The OSC completed EPA's participation at the IOF and departed the USVI on 08/15/2022.</p>						
2.	Dates:		Event:		ACT		NOT	
	Issue / Concern:							
	Agencies Involved:							
	Decisions Made:							
3.	Dates:		Event:		ACT		NOT	
	Issue / Concern:							
	Agencies Involved:							
	Decisions Made:							
4.	Dates:		Event:		ACT		NOT	
	Issue / Concern:							
	Agencies Involved:							
	Decisions Made:							
5.	Dates:		Event:		ACT		NOT	X
	Issue / Concern:							
	Agencies Involved:							
	Decisions Made:							

C. RRT Exercises – No CRRT exercises during the period of this report.				
1.	Dates:		Event:	
	Agencies Involved:			
	Summary of exercise:			
D. Changes in RRT Leadership				
Agency		Outgoing Personnel		Incoming personnel
1) USCG RRT Co-Chair		Forest Willis		Richard Lavigne
2) USCG RRT Coordinator		LT Andrew Garcia		LT Gabriella Zambrana
3)				
E. Best Practices and Lessons Learned by the RRT (which may help other RRTs)				

None during the period of this report.

F. Federal, State, and Local Planning and Coordination Efforts

EPA is providing technical assistance and advice to VITEMA, DPNR and other territorial agencies in the reestablishment of the Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and their local contingency plans.

In consideration of hazardous conditions associated with the shutdown of refinery operations and subsequent activities associated with the removal of dangerous chemicals from systems at the refinery facility on St. Croix, (formerly the Limetree Bay Refinery, presently Port Hamilton Refining and Transportation LLLP), EPA and USCG agreed to a formal transfer of Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) responsibility for the refinery facility. Effective August 12, 2021, EPA Region II assumed FOSC responsibilities for the refinery facility until mutually agreed upon by EPA and USCG. USCG Sector San Juan retains FOSC responsibilities for the adjacent terminal facility.

In preparation for the removal under EPA oversight of anhydrous ammonia, liquified propane gas, and amines from the refinery, EPA is working with the USVI government to develop, review and exercise local contingency plans. During the chemical removal activities, EPA will conduct around-the-clock air monitoring to ensure the community's safety. EPA will display real-time air monitoring results on a publicly-available website. Additional information can be found on EPA's website at: <https://www.epa.gov/vi/refinery-st-croix-us-virgin-islands>

G. Challenges and Issues (and Operational Requirements Which May Require NRT Attention)

Due to limited IT capabilities at the commonwealth and territorial government level, virtual CRRT meetings were determined to be non-practical during the pandemic. As a result of the time gap and the high level of personnel changes since the last in-person CRRT meeting, the first post-pandemic in-person meeting will include a significant amount of time to reintroduce CRRT members and participants roles, responsibilities, and capabilities; review the location and contents of the Regional Contingency Plan, CRRT policies, procedures and guidance documents, etc.