

Supporting Teams and Special Forces: In addition to defining the lead agencies in spill response, the National Response System also defines the roles of other agencies, such as those with trustee responsibility for natural resources, or those assigned to the National or Regional Response Teams to coordinate the support of those agencies' resources to a Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) during an incident. The National Contingency Plan (NCP) also establishes several special teams with specific capabilities to assist in spill response, including specially trained Strike Teams, a Public Information Assist Team, Scientific Support Coordinators, and an Environmental Response Team.

Suggested References:

National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan
40 CFR Part 300
www.epa.gov/oilspill/lawsregs.htm

Coastal Area Contingency Plans
Available through the RRT IV Homepage
via the NRT website

National Response Team Website
www.nrt.org

Document prepared by:
Region IV
Regional Response Team

RRT IV Co-Chairs:
U.S. Coast Guard 305-536-5651
U.S. EPA 404-562-8721

Oil or Chemical Spill Notification
Call the National Response Center at
800-424-8802

Oil Spill Response
in the Region IV Coastal Zone,
contact the U.S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Office (MSO):

MSO Wilmington, NC 910-792-8408	MSO Charleston, SC 843-724-7616
MSO Savannah, GA 912-652-4353	MSO Jacksonville, FL 904-247-7310
MSO Miami, FL 305-732-0160	MSO Tampa, FL 813-228-2189
MSO Mobile, AL 334-441-5121	

In the Region IV Inland Zone,
contact the U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency:
404-562-8700

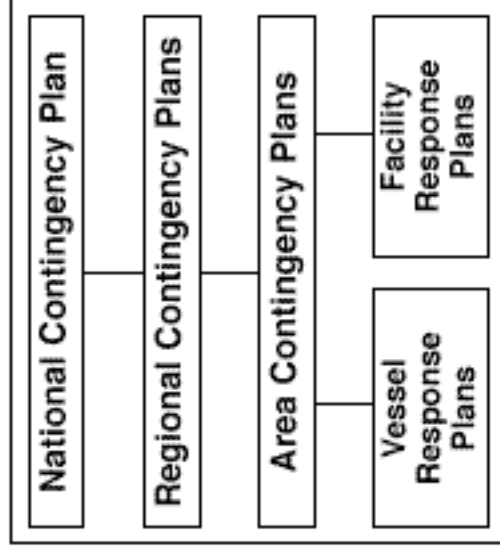
Inland Zone U.S. Coast Guard Offices are:

MSO Huntington, WV 800-253-7465	MSO Louisville, KY 800-253-7465
MSO Paducah, KY 502-442-1621	MSO Memphis, TN 901-544-3912

State Pollution Response Contacts are:

North Carolina 919-733-3300	South Carolina Spill: 888-481-0125 Office: 803-896-4000
Georgia 404-656-4300	Florida 850-413-9911
Alabama 334-242-4378	Mississippi 601-352-9100
Tennessee 800-258-3300	Kentucky 800-928-2380

OIL SPILL RESPONSE PLANNING AND SPILL RESPONSE ROLES



Introduction

When prevention efforts fail and an oil spill occurs on the water, spill responders must quickly organize and establish incident specific priorities to focus on the difficult task of cleaning up the spill. The National Response System ensures coordinated oil spill planning and response efforts by government and industry. Oil pollution cleanup under the National Response System is the responsibility of the polluter, so the System includes requirements to ensure this happens, and the authority and resources to quickly augment or make up for responder inadequacy.

This pamphlet provides an overview of the network of spill response plans and the roles and responsibilities in oil spill cleanup.

Spill Contingency and Response Plans

National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan: Oil spill

response planning in the United States is accomplished through a mandated set of interrelated plans. The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, commonly referred to as the National Contingency Plan (NCP), provides the broad, national priorities and framework to ensure efficient, coordinated, and effective action to minimize the effects of oil and chemical spills. The NCP is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in consultation with the National Response Team, which consists of 16 federal agencies with interests in various aspects of emergency response to pollution incidents. The NRT is chaired by the EPA and vice-chaired by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Regional Contingency Plans: Ten Regional Contingency Plans, one of which applies to Region IV, are modeled after the NCP and add information specific to the region; these plans are written by Regional Response Teams (RRTs) whose membership mirrors that of the federal team, but includes all states in the region.

Area Contingency Plans: The next tier of plans is Area Contingency Plans (ACPs), which cover sub-regional geographic areas. The ACPs are a focal point of response planning, providing detailed information on

response procedures, priorities, and appropriate countermeasures. ACPs are written by Area Committees assembled from governmental agencies which have pollution response authority; non-governmental participants may attend meetings and provide input. In Region IV there are seven coastal ACPs and one inland ACP. The coastal Area Committees are chaired by respective Federal On-Scene Coordinators from the Coast Guard and the inland Area Committee is chaired by the Region IV EPA RRT Co-Chair. The coastal Area Committees are comprised of members from local or area specific jurisdictions. The inland Area Committee members also comprise the Region IV Regional Response Team.

Industry Response Plans: The final tier of plans under the National Response System umbrella for oil spill response are the Vessel Response Plans and Facility Response Plans required of facilities or vessels which handle oil as a cargo in sufficient quantity that could cause substantial harm to the environment if spilled. These plans detail pollution response action plans for the specific vessel or facility, and must be submitted to the Coast Guard or the EPA for review or approval, depending on the threat to the environment.

Plan Testing and Improvement: The plans of the National Response System are regularly exercised. This ensures that the plan is current and that responsibilities assigned by the plan are tested and understood. Lessons learned from responses and drills are shared nationally, through both publications and an online database, to continually improve plans based on experience.

Spill Roles and Responsibilities

Oil spill responses can involve a large number of organizations due to the potential for wide-spread and diverse impacts. Government agencies at several levels may have jurisdiction over different aspects of a spill response. To ensure effective coordination, lead agencies have been designated within the National Response System to coordinate or direct spill response efforts. While many spills are small and are cleaned up by the spiller under the supervision of local authorities, the National Response System ensures that state and federal resources are available to ensure adequate cleanup on larger or more complex spills. The following discussion focuses on spill responses that involve federal and state responders.

Federal On-Scene Coordinator: At the federal level, the On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) is an official from EPA for spills in the inland zone and from the Coast Guard for spills in the coastal zone. The FOSC is the lead federal official for spill response. The FOSC's responsibilities include coordinating all containment, removal, and disposal efforts and resources during an incident, including federal, state, local, and responsible party efforts. The FOSC represents all federal interests at the command level of the response organization.

State On-Scene Coordinator: State agencies also are key players in oil spill response. States have a position similar to the FOSC to coordinate or direct their spill response efforts. State regulations pertaining to spill removal activities may exceed those of the federal government, as allowed by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC) represents all state interests at the command level of the response organization.

Responsible Party: The spiller, or responsible party, has the primary responsibility to conduct spill cleanup, following the procedures listed in the vessel or facility response plan. The applicable plan provides for resources to respond to a worst case discharge from that vessel or facility. Industry is also required to have authorized and qualified individuals available 24 hours a day to respond to a spill, and to have sufficient funds available to cover the cost of pollution response to the limit of liability for the vessel or facility. The Responsible Party (RP) will normally also be represented at the command level of the response organization to represent their interests and to help coordinate assets and response actions.

Unified Command: The triage of federal, state, and responsible party representation is known as a Unified Command. The federal, state, and responsible party lead officials, because they share the goal of performing a rapid and effective spill cleanup, are encouraged to form a "Unified Command" to direct spill response efforts. Unified Command retains the underlying authorities of the federal and state officials, while allowing the three response teams to integrate and follow a joint incident action plan.