

coordination of these agreements. The NRT also provides a focal point for coordinating government-to-government requests for international hazmat and oil response assistance requiring multi-agency resources.

#### **Counter-terrorism Planning and Response**

The National Response System is the federal mechanism for preparing for and responding to a release or threat of a release of oil, hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants into the environment, that may present an imminent and substantial danger to the public health or welfare (regardless of cause). As a result, this system has key assets, interests, responsibilities, and capabilities that support other federal agencies, states, and local responders to mitigate the danger to public health/welfare from terrorism.

#### **Resources**

Assisting the OSC on request are specialist and specialized teams such as the following:

The Coast Guard's **National Strike Force (NSF)**. The NSF is composed of three strategically located teams and a coordination center. The strike teams have specially trained personnel and are equipped to respond to major oil spills and chemical releases. The coordination center maintains a national inventory listing of spill response equipment and assists with the development and implementation of an exercise and training program for the National Response System. NSF capabilities are especially suited to incidents occurring in the marine environment, but also include site assessments, safety, action plan development, and documentation for both inland and coastal zone incidents.

The Coast Guard's **Public Information Assist Team (PIAT)**. The PIAT is a highly skilled unit of public affairs specialists prepared to complement the existing public information capabilities of the OSC.

**Scientific Support Coordinator (SSCs)**. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provides SSCs in coastal and marine areas. The SSCs serve on the OSC's staff as the head of a scientific team. This support team provides expertise in environmental chemistry, oil slick tracking, pollutant transport modeling, natural resources at risk, environmental trade-offs of countermeasures and cleanup, information management, contingency planning, and liaison to the scientific community and the Natural Resource Trustees. EPA provides the SSCs for the inland areas.

**EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT)**. EPA's ERT is a group of highly trained scientists and engineers based in Edison, NJ and Cincinnati, OH. Its capabilities include multimedia sampling and analysis, hazard assessment, cleanup techniques and specialized technical support. EPA's ERT provides SSCs for the inland zone.

**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 919-733-3867	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

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

# The National Response System



## What is the National Response System?

The National oil and Hazardous Substances Response System is the federal government's mechanism for emergency response to discharges of oil into navigable waters of the United States, and releases of chemicals into the environment. The system provides a framework for coordination among federal, state, and local responders and responsible parties.

The National Response System is described in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), found in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 300. The NCP establishes three organizational levels:

- The National Response Team (NRT);
- Regional Response Teams (RRTs); and
- On Scene Coordinators (OSCs).

## Area and Local Planning

Subpart C of the NCP describes the roles and responsibilities for planning at the federal, state, and local levels to achieve a coordinated planning and response system. The NCP is based on legislative authorities including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act, and the Clean Water Act (CWA) as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90). OPA 90 required the establishment of Area Committees comprised of federal, state, and local agency representatives. Under the direction of a federal OSC, Area Committees develop Area Contingency Plans (ACPs) and coordinate them with state plans and Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) community plans. ACPs should address the following:

- A description of the area covered by the plan including environmental/economic sensitive areas;
- Responsibilities of various responders;
- A list of equipment and countermeasures to mitigate the pollution incident;
- Procedures on the use of dispersants;
- Procedures on how the ACP integrates with other pollution response plans required by regulation;
- Fish and wildlife sensitive environment planning;

Under EPCRA, LEPCs are appointed and supervised by their State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs) to prepare a local emergency response plan and review it once a year or more, as required. LEPCs consist of elected state and local officials, law enforcement, firefighting, health, other relevant response personnel, community groups and other interested parties, and owners and operators of

subject facilities. LEPC plans are to be coordinated with applicable ACPs and state emergency response plans.

## National Response Team

The National Response Team's membership consists of 16 federal agencies with responsibilities, interests, and expertise in various aspects of emergency response to pollution incidents. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) serves as chair and the Coast Guard serves as vice-chair of the NRT. The NRT is primarily a national planning, policy, and coordinating body and does not respond directly to incidents. The NRT provides policy guidance prior to an incident and assistance as requested by an On-Scene Coordinator via a Regional Response Team during an incident. NRT assistance usually takes the form of technical advice, access to additional resources/equipment or coordination with other RRTs.

## Regional Response Teams (RRTs)

There are 13 Regional Response Teams, one for each of ten federal regions, plus one for Alaska, one for the Caribbean, and one for the Pacific Basin. Each RRT maintains a Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) and has State, as well as federal government, representation.

### RRT REGION IV MEMBER AGENCIES

Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Coast Guard
Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Department of Defense
Department of Labor
Occupational Safety & Health Administration
General Services Administration
Department of Agriculture
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Department of Health & Human Services
Public Health Service
Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry
Department of Interior
Department of Justice
Department of State
Department of Transportation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Energy
Tennessee Valley Authority
State of Alabama
State of Florida
State of Georgia
State of Mississippi
State of North Carolina
State of South Carolina
State of Tennessee
Commonwealth of Kentucky

EPA and the Coast Guard co-chair the RRTs. Like the NRT, the standing RRTs are planning, policy, and coordinating bodies and do not respond directly to the scene. The RRT

provides assistance as requested by the On-Scene Coordinator during an incident.

If assistance requested by an OSC exceeds an RRT's capability, the RRT may request assistance from the NRT. During an incident, the RRT may either be alerted by telephone or convened as a group. RRTs can convene on scene, at the request of the OSC, in the form of an Incident Specific RRT. RRTs may also provide assistance to state and local governments in preparedness, planning, and training for emergency response.

RRTs may review local plans at the request of the LEPC established under EPCRA as a local planning body for response to chemical accidents. One of the primary purposes of the RRT review is to offer follow-up technical assistance to SERCs and LEPCs that might enhance local planning.

## On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs)

The On-Scene Coordinator is a federal official pre-designated by EPA for inland areas and by the Coast Guard for coastal areas. (Inland/Coastal boundaries are specified in individual Regional or Area Contingency Plans.) DOD and DOE also provide OSCs for radiological incidents from sources under their oversight. DOD also provides the OSC for hazardous substance releases from DOD sources.

The OSC coordinates all containment, removal, and disposal efforts and resources during an incident. These include federal, state, local, and responsible party efforts. The OSC has access to the special forces discussed below to support response efforts. The OSC can also be a source of valuable support and information to the local response community.

## National Response Center (NRC)

Created by the NCP, the National Response Center is charged with receiving notifications of all chemical, radiological, oil, and biological releases regulated by the CWA, as amended by OPA 90. Located in the Coast Guard Headquarters Command Center, the NRC immediately relays reports to the cognizant, pre-designated On-Scene Coordinator.

## International Involvement

The United States has established joint contingency plans and agreements with both Mexico and Canada to ensure coordinated and integrated preparedness and response efforts for pollution incidents that occur along the shared boundaries. The NRT serves as co-chair of the International Joint Advisory Team in Canada and the International Joint Response Team in Mexico, which serve as the policy and advisory bodies with overall responsibility for the maintenance, promotion, and