

# **2011 Marine Firefighting Symposium Final Report**

Respectfully submitted by,  
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The opinions expressed in this PWSRCAC-commissioned report are not necessarily those of PWSRCAC.

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary	Page 3
Acknowledgements	Page 5
Considerations for Future Symposiums	Page 7
Recommendations to Participants	Page 8
Evaluation comments	Page 8
Conclusion	Page 14

## **Executive Summary**

Nearly a year of planning went into preparing for the 2011 marine firefighting symposium held Oct. 4-6, 2011. Based on the attendee evaluations from the 2005 symposium and the combined knowledge and experience of the symposium coordinators and local stakeholders we designed an agenda that we thought would meet the needs of this year's attendee's. As previously mentioned we engaged local stakeholders early on in the planning process, as their participation was essential in many of the training sessions.

As usual there were many organizations that contributed to the success of this symposium. No matter how much planning the event contractor and instructors put into preparing for the symposium it requires cooperation from all involved including the private sector participants. You will find a complete list of contributors in another section of this report.

This year was somewhat unusual in that we set an agenda and didn't have to deviate from it. Because of the difficulty in coordinating a vessel for the drill we are usually faced with the possibility of having to re-arrange the agenda to accommodate the availability of a vessel or some other outside influence. This year we were very fortunate that we were able to work with Conoco Phillips and Polar Tanker to get a ship at the container terminal when we needed it there. I can't thank Conoco Phillips and Polar Tanker enough for all they were able to do to see that our needs were accommodated. Only through their generosity, sacrifice and commitment to public safety were we allowed access to a vessel. A special thanks goes to SWAPA. As usual they came

through and delivered the Emerald Isle for our small boat exercise. Not only do they get the boat to the dock on time but also allow us to smoke it up and drag hose through the interior of the vessel.

Because of the salvage and marine firefighting regulation (33CFR, part 155) we designed a portion of the symposium to introduce this regulation and the possible role of the public fire service. Since we had a mix of newer firefighters and firefighters with more experience these sessions had some mixed reviews. Overall I feel we accomplished our goal of informing and generating interest in the subject.

As with past symposia the overwhelming desire of those attending is to participate in hands on training. The reality is that you must first understand what the incident needs are and how you will be able to address those needs. This comes with education and that means classroom training. We always try to balance training with exercises and I feel this symposium does a good job of doing that. The highlight of the three days is always the small boat and ship exercises and this year was no different. Those attending

Few problems arose this year due in part to the planning that went into this symposium. Because this is not the first time the coordinators have worked on projects of this magnitude, potential problems were anticipated and contingencies were planned. The fact that those contingencies were not needed was due in part to the team at the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Committee (PWSRCAC). Donna, Alan and Anna were fantastic to work with and their efforts were apparent.

We set the bar very high in 2008. I believe it was the success of previous symposia that accounted, in part, for the tremendous interest in the 2011 symposium. Those in attendance were engaged and remained engaged throughout the symposium.

Good instructors will size up the attendees and raise or lower the level of instruction they provide to best meet the needs of those attending. I can tell you that as instructors, everyone raised their level of instruction to better meet the needs of the attendees. I can also say that the entire instructor cadre felt this symposium was extremely rewarding, in part because of the level of knowledge and participation of those in attendance.

## **Acknowledgements**

Although it isn't surprising to me that so much hard work goes into planning an event like this I am always amazed at the cooperation extended by so many people and organizations. I think it appropriate to identify some of those people and entities that assisted in the success of this year's symposium.

I'd like to thank the **PWSRCAC** for their continued support of this valuable training. Without the PWSRCAC taking the lead and hosting this event it would not have occurred. I would like to thank the project manager, **Alan Sorum**, and his team for all the hard work in preparation of the event and for their diligent work keeping all the details on track throughout the symposium.

Other acknowledgements for outstanding community partnership must go to **Conoco Phillips Marine and Polar Tankers, Inc.** for providing us with an incredible training opportunity by allowing us access to the vessel Polar Discovery for our ship tour. The vessel tour was an eye opener for those who participated and I believe focused their attention to the complexities of responding to a fire aboard a vessel of this type.

Special thanks also go to **Southwest Alaska Pilots Association (SWAPA)** for their continued support of this training. By providing us unlimited access to the pilot boat

Emerald Isle we are able to deliver a realistic “hands on” exercise, which is always one of the highlights for those attending.

Once again the salvage community played an important role. **T and T Bisso** provided staff to display and demonstrate their portable pump, which has been cached in Valdez with the Valdez Fire Department. **Donjon-Smit** provided staff to display their portable equipment cache as well as participate in the panel discussion session. **Resolve Marine Group** also provided staff to participate in the panel discussion.

We also had support and participation from entities representing local, state and federal interests. The **City of Valdez** continues to support this training. Much is asked of the city in preparation for the symposium.

The **United States Coast Guard** was involved in the planning and delivery of this symposium and where involved in the panel discussion session with two representatives on the panel.

We would like to thank **Crowley Maritime** and **Marine Response Alliance** for providing a display of firefighting capabilities of their tugs in the Prince William Sound area and for their participation in the panel discussion session.

As mentioned in the opening remarks of the symposium, this symposium is a perfect example of a private/public partnership. The benefit of private\public partnerships was one of the messages that we tried to convey and being able to show that, as part of the successful planning of the symposium was helpful in illustrating that point.

This year we had 75 attendees from the public fire service. I want to personally thank everyone that took the time to attend this year. Everyone was engaged, enthusiastic and clearly came to the symposium to learn and contribute.

## Considerations for Future Symposia

As in the past we leaned heavily on the lessons learned from past symposia and especially the 2008 symposium and the comments from those who attended that event. We designed the 2011 agenda based, in part, on the comments from the 2008 symposium. We also relied on the combined experiences of all five instructors to determine the best subjects to include. It appears we hit the mark again. The evaluations received from the attendees of the 2011 symposium provide some insight to the success of the event. What isn't reflected in the evaluations is the talk and side conversations we heard during the breaks and in the restaurants and bars in the evenings. The attendees kept the training going long after we ended for the day. With that being said it is still clear that the attendees feel that more time would be beneficial. We did try to pack a full schedule into the time we had and for some that was overwhelming. For future symposia I would suggest dialing back the amount of training we deliver or adding additional time to the symposium.

We decided, based on comments from the 2008 symposium, we would go with a single tract of training rather than a two-tract event like in 2008. We ended up with more registered attendees than expected but made a conscious decision to stick with the single tract idea knowing it would cause larger group sessions. We felt confident that we could manage the larger groups. It did, at times, prove to be a challenge but we did succeed in the end. I feel that either method would succeed and both should be considered as viable for future symposia.

## **Recommendations to Participants**

We continue to urge all agencies to seek out partnerships both public and private that will enhance their ability to respond to an incident should one occur in their jurisdiction. As discussed at the symposium, the best way to succeed in the mitigation of a large scale marine incident is to leverage all available resources and that includes all private resources. The only way this can work is if everyone is included in the planning process and helps to identify the unknowns prior to an incident.

I also recommend that all fire agencies become familiar with the USCG regulations on marine firefighting and salvage (33CFR part 155). As mentioned at the symposium these regulations could have a positive effect on the local fire services ability to respond and manage a large marine incident if we choose to participate. Remember, there are potential benefits to participating and the only way to know what is best for you is to explore the possibilities. If you would like my input on this issue or have a question please contact Jeff Johnson at [jeff.johnson@cityofvancouver.us](mailto:jeff.johnson@cityofvancouver.us) or John Taylor at [vesselfire@msn.com](mailto:vesselfire@msn.com) and we'll be happy to share what we know.

## **Evaluation Comments**

The following is a sample of the comments received from the 47 evaluations returned. Each attendee was asked to fill out a class evaluation at the conclusion of the symposium. The evaluations consisted of two parts, a section using the Likert scale of 1-5, 5 being the best including space for general comments about the session and a section that requested written answers to seven symposium related questions and a place for “additional comments”.



Evaluation information for each session is provided below. I took the first portion and averaged the point totals for each session. For the second portion I've provided a sampling of responses to the questions posed to the attendees.

**Shipboard Firefighting Basics:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.130

Course Content and Detail = 4.273

Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.500

Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.106

**General Comments:**

At times had trouble following the instructor's train of thought.

**Fire Plans and Vessel Familiarization:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.000

Course Content and Detail = 4.085

Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.400

Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.128

**General Comments:**

Very informative but more time could have been spent on other topics.

I wish we could have spent more time on this and had more and varied plans.

Group review of paper plans for better understanding.

More time, smaller groups.

Seemed rushed.

Use USCG/ABS or other to describe ship design and construction.

**Politics of a Marine Incident:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 3.844

Course Content and Detail = 3.809

Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.064

Interactive and Visual Resources = 3.511

**General Comments:**

Needed handout with FAQ's that are common on issue.

Did not understand.

Interesting topic, needs more time.

Handouts needed, difficult subject.

More discussion would have been helpful.  
Very informative.  
Needed more background about salvage.

**Cruise Ship Basics:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.200  
Course Content and Detail = 4.170  
Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.426  
Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.106

**General Comments:**

I wish we would have spent more time on this.

**Small Boats and Marinas:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.182  
Course Content and Detail = 4.085  
Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.553  
Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.106

**General Comments:**

Not enough time, hands on.

**Panel Discussion:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 3.951  
Course Content and Detail = 3.733  
Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.178  
Interactive and Visual Resources = 3.818

**General Comments:**

Felt somewhat out of the loop.  
Needed handouts  
Difficult to hear and see the panelist from back of room.

**Small Boat Exercise:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.227  
Course Content and Detail = 4.085  
Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.426  
Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.170

**General Comments:**

A boat load of information, thank you.  
Include a group exercise with hands on down at the small boat harbor.

Thanks, this was a great course.  
This was the best part of the course.  
Great drill.  
More time on the docks.

**Vessel Tour:**

**General Evaluation**

Overall Evaluation = 4.526  
Course Content and Detail = 4.659  
Instructor Knowledge and Clarity = 4.683  
Interactive and Visual Resources = 4.683

**General Comments:**

The vessel tour was great.  
Thank you very much.  
Most Excellent.

**Overall rating of the 2011 Marine Firefighting Symposium: 4.325**

**1) How could the symposium be improved?**

More hands on  
Require other participation; APSC terminal, longshoremen, vessel owners, etc.  
Improvement in instructional aids.  
Shorten classroom with more hands on.  
More intensive exercise involving tanker/cargo vessel.  
Get USCG to do a salvage and marine firefighting presentation.  
Provide roster with phone numbers of attendee's.  
Need more live drills.  
Add exercises involving simulated responses.  
I can't think of anything.  
More training on overcoming municipal objections to consent agreements.  
More time.  
More exercises.  
I don't know of any way to improve. Very well organized and informative.  
Keep doing it.  
More on tactics.  
Provide list of those who donated time, money & equip. so we can thank them.  
Smaller groups  
More small boat training  
4 to 5 days would be better with more time spent on each topic.  
More hands on.

**2) What was the most beneficial part of the symposium?**

Small boat, cruise ship and tactics  
Small boat exercise  
Tactics

Ship tour and panel discussion  
All was good  
Small boat and cruise ship  
Emerald Isle and Polar Discovery  
Fire pre-plans  
Just learning basics was beneficial  
Getting onboard the ship and the Emerald Isle  
The hands on portion  
Ship familiarization  
Exposure to tactics for small and large boats  
Ship tour  
The instructor's knowledge  
Small boat and marina  
All was excellent  
Facilitated interaction among people  
Understanding unified command and OPA90 regulations  
Excellent and keep improving

**3) Comments on the facility.**

Excellent  
Acoustics in room were poor  
Civic center was fine. A hands-on training facility would benefit the symposium  
Very nice  
Very good  
The Civic Center was excellent  
Great venue for this  
Good, clean  
Great

**4) Comments on subject areas to add, expand on, or remove.**

Spend time on foam application, logistics, fixed systems and CO2 operations  
More time on each subject  
Need more on small boats and less on tankers and salvage operations  
Add shore side response to cruise ship incidents  
Expand on small boats and marinas  
Consent agreements should be emphasized  
More on tactics  
Add more drills and fewer lectures  
More hands on with small vessels  
More local fire department involvement  
More on marine fire tactics  
More detail on consent agreements and interaction with salvage industry  
Hands on training with tanker  
Add tabletop for both marina fire and shipboard fire.

**5) Comments on the timing of the symposium (length of sessions, etc.)**

Fall is good after hunting season and April and May are good  
Good length  
Longer  
Just right  
Good length and substantial breaks  
More time and more topics  
Good  
Perfect  
Try to squeeze into two days  
It couldn't be any shorter, longer mabe  
Could be one day longer

**6) Value of this training to you/relevance.**

High value  
Align more with state standard for shipboard firefighting for marine firefighters  
Very valuable, I will use what I learned to rain my agency  
It helps me to go back and train co-workers  
High  
Really opened my eyes! Very beneficial  
Excellent. I had no prior marine firefighting training  
Tremendous  
Very relevant  
Yes!  
Added more tools to the box  
Excellent value, reinforces the need to get mutual aid agreements  
I was looking for more formal training  
Great familiarization

**7) Comments on instructional method.**

Best demo I've seen on stability  
Some of the best shipboard basics discussions I have seen  
Great trim and stability props  
Thanks to all instructors for time and effort  
More breaks  
More hands on  
Instructors were very good and knowledgeable

**8) Additional comments.**

This was a great course, I will recommend to others  
Overall very valuable  
Great and thanks  
Room acoustics were tough  
I was overall very impressed – Excellent! Excellent!  
Well done  
Thanks to everyone who made this possible  
Keep up the good work

Thanks for the hospitality  
Very much enjoyed this course

## **Conclusion**

The 2008 Marine Firefighting Symposium exceeded our expectations and has set the bar high for future events. As you can see after reading this final report, and digesting the evaluations provided by those who attended, this symposium was well received and appreciated. Each session and each instructor received high marks and the training will impact those attending and the departments they represent.

As always we strive to deliver timely and relevant training that will be well received by those in attendance. I feel we succeeded in achieving that goal. We did receive some suggestions for improvement but I would expect nothing less from the firefighters in Alaska. The suggestions were good and will be considered in the future.

A common request throughout the symposium was that this training be offered in other parts of Alaska and more frequently. We support all ideas that help provide quality training to the fire service and continue our commitment to help expand this opportunity to include a larger audience.

In closing, this has been a productive and positive symposium. It is our hope that the training doesn't end with the symposium. We look to those in attendance to take the lessons learned back to their departments and build on them. We stressed this message at the symposium. As always, the instructors are available to provide assistance and guidance as needed. We have included our e-mail addresses and welcome any questions.

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