
Drill Monitoring Annual Report

2009

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2009 Drill Report Index

| Date | Report Number | Drill Description |
|--------------------|----------------------|---|
| 12-Mar | 752.431.090312 | Tanker C-Plan Personnel Verification Exercise |
| 1-April | 752.431.090401 | Hartney Bay Geographic Response Strategy Exercise |
| 7-April- 20-May | 752.431.090407 | Polar Tanker Drills |
| 18-May | 752.431.090518 | Wildlife Task Force Exercise |
| 25-June | 752.431.090625 | Valdez Marine Terminal Area 58 Drainage Exercise |
| 15-July | 752.431.090715 | Port Etches Geographic Response Strategy Exercise |
| 5-Sept | 752.431.090905 | Alaskan Navigator Emergency Towing Exercise |
| 11-Oct | 752.431.091105 | Valdez Marine Terminal Berth 5 Exercise |
| 10-Dec | 752.431.091210 | Sheep Bay Unannounced Night Drill |

2009 Drill Summary

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) staff observed and evaluated 10 drills and exercises in 2009. In addition to the drills and exercises, the PWSRCAC staff also participated in Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) 2009 fishing vessel trainings. All of these reports fall into the categories described below.

Tanker Towing Exercises

SERVS conducted six tanker emergency towing exercises in 2009. These exercises were conducted in the summer months between July 3 and September 16. The exercises followed the same format as the previous two years with the tankers being arrested with one tug and then being towed with one of the Prevention and Response Tugs and their emergency towing packages. All of the towing exercises that were observed went very well. This training was put to good use on the SeaRiver Kodiak incident on January 17, 2010.

Open Water Response Exercises

The PWSRCAC staff attended only one open water exercise in 2009, but it was a true unannounced drill conducted at night in Sheep Bay near Cordova. On December 10, 2009, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation initiated a two-phase drill. The first phase required SERVS to assign resources to all of the open water task forces. Phase 2 consisted of a full deployment of Task Force 1 with the Naked Island TransRec Barge and tug working in conjunction with fishing vessels from Cordova.

There were several lessons that were learned from this drill including the need to look at the boom deployment sequences to allow for more skimmer operational time, the need for a larger crew pool for fishing vessels because some vessels had trouble finding enough trained crew, and the need to review the role of the Task Force Leader and who should fill that role. Another major issue that surfaced during the December 10 exercise was the expected work duration of the barge crews. As it currently stands, crews are expected to be relieved 18 hours after the beginning of deploying a response barge. As a result, if a spill happens 11 hours into a shift, crew could be worked up to 30 hours without being relieved. There are some obvious safety issues that need to be addressed.

Nearshore Response Exercises

SERVS began incorporating more sensitive area deployments into its nearshore exercises in 2009. All of the annual fishing vessel training incorporated a nearshore deployment during the on-water training. SERVS (through the last tanker plan approval) has committed to deploying an average of five Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) per year. Therefore, sensitive area protection has and will likely continue to be a focus of the nearshore deployments over the next few years.

SERVS conducted two GRS deployments that were observed by PWSRCAC staff in 2009. These were larger deployments in Hartney Bay in Cordova and at Port Etches. The Port Etches deployments were timed during the Nuuciq Spirit Camp.

Valdez Marine Terminal Drills

The Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) as usual conducted two exercises that were observed by PWSRCAC staff during 2009. The summer exercise conducted on June 25 was a spill scenario of an oil spill coming from the tanks down Drainage 58. This was a field deployment that included setting up a temporary dam, a temporary pipeline from the settlement pond used to recover oil to berth 1, and a decontamination setup.

The second VMT exercise consisted of tabletop and deployment elements. This spill scenario was 50-barrel spill out of containment from berth 5. The initial response was emphasized with the establishment of Terminal Emergency Operations Center (TEOC) and the eventual transfer of the spill management to the Valdez Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) in the SERVS building. Field deployments were also conducted with the use of JBF skimmers from the terminal, boom, and a Current Buster system.

Other Exercises

Polar Tankers conducted a two-phased tabletop exercise that spanned over two months. The Alyeska/SERVS Incident Management Team (IMT) was used to respond to and manage a Polar Tanker spill near Glacier Island for the first two operational periods for two days in April. In May, the ConocoPhillips and Polar Tanker IMT transitioned the response for the third and fourth operational periods for two days to complete the exercise. Key elements for these exercises included working with the Regional Stakeholders Committee, wildlife efforts, identifying sensitive areas, and the transition from one the SERVS IMT to the Responsible Party's IMT.

A wildlife task force exercise was held in conjunction with the Polar Tanker exercises. This exercise was the first time a full wildlife task force, as described in the SERVS Technical Manual, was deployed in the field. This exercise was conducted at Gold Creek in Port Valdez and was well attended by the state and federal wildlife trustee agencies as well as experts within the oiled wildlife community. This exercise provided an opportunity to identify several lessons learned that would enhance SERVS wildlife response. Lessons learned included communication issues, the need for better plan for field activities, and the need for bigger skiffs.

A drill was conducted in March to verify the personnel identified in the August 2008 Personnel Workgroup report were available to fill the response needs for the first 72-hours of a response to a Scenario 809-type spill. Alyeska/SERVS was able to identify personnel for all of the identified positions.

SERVS Fishing Vessel Training

SERVS, TCC and OSHA have combined to develop a 24-hour marine HAZWOPER training program that focuses on marine oil spill response. In 2009, SERVS conducted these three-day fishing vessel training programs in Kodiak, Homer, Seward, Cordova,

Whittier, Chenega, and Valdez. Most of the training took place in the fall with only 267 vessels being trained. There has been an observable decline in the number of trained vessels for the last few years. In 2006, 328 vessels participated in the fishing vessel training; in 2007, 305 vessels participated; in 2008, 277 vessels participated; and in 2009, 267 vessels participated. The decline in the numbers for fishing vessels was a precursor to the fishing vessels issues brought to light in January 2010.

Focus of Future Drills and Exercises

Similar to last year's recommendations, there are several areas that should be included in future exercises. The Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan was rewritten in 2007 and many areas of that plan still need to be tested. The Valdez Marine Terminal's Contingency Plan was approved again in 2008, and an effort to rewrite that plan is underway but the current plan still needs to be tested.

Operating in the Dark

Two open water darkness drills were recently conducted, one in December 2009 and another in January 2010. Both of these drills demonstrated that it is more difficult to operate at night. Issues such as lighting the booms so they can be better seen have been better addressed as night kits have now been placed on the barges, but adding lights to the boom during the deployments slows the deployment times down. Most of the fishing vessels are not used to performing oil spill-related tasks in the dark.

As identified by the PWSRCAC Response Gap Analysis, response in darkness is one of the main limiting factors for oil spill response in Prince William Sound. Follow-up exercises are needed for the open water and nearshore task forces. Spills in the winter months will require an effective response during the hours of darkness so this element should be practiced as part of the annual exercise plan.

Unannounced Exercises

In December, ADEC call the first true unannounced open water drill in the five years since I have been working in the drill monitor position. This drill was planned and implemented without Alyeska or the PWS shipper's knowledge of when the exercise was going to occur. Many of the elements of this drill were successful, however, several areas were identified that needed additional work. The point to using unannounced drills is to get a true snapshot of response readiness rather than a planned and practice demonstration. PWSRCAC has been advocating true unannounced drills for several years and appreciates that ADEC called this exercise. However, PWSRCAC would like to see an increase to the number and frequency of unannounced exercises, such as one to two per a year. These unannounced drills do not have to be done on a grand scale, but these drills are invaluable for testing the actual response capability.

Combined Tabletop and Field Deployment Exercises

It has become a rare occurrence to have drills that combine the command post tabletop and field deployments. Past drills in the 1990's and early 2000's combined field

deployments and tabletop functions more often and sometimes on a large scale such as the BP SONS drill. Recently, the VMT has begun to mix the two field and command post functions in the same drill. While some elements of the communications could be used better, these drills do provide a better sense of realism than just using the drill control. Communications between the field and the command post is a critical part of a real response and needs to be tested to ensure they will work as anticipated. In addition, the time it actually takes to deploy the response resources takes longer than simulated in most drills. Actual aerial observations of the deployments should be conducted and communicated back to the command post. All of these activities take more time than is ever simulated during a tabletop drill. Combining a tabletop and field deployments would provide a realism that is not usually provided during the standard tabletop drills.

SERVS Technical Manual Tactics

This is another item from the 2007 and 2008 annual drill reports that still needs more implementation. The SERVS Technical Manual provides a detailed description of most of the tactics that would be used during a response to a spill. These tactics include a listing of both personnel and equipment needed to implement the various tasks. These tactics should be tested to determine if the proper levels and types of equipment and personnel are identified to accomplish the tasks. Tactics that would be good to see in the near future include the Valdez Star with the barge Allison Creek (PWS-OW-2), the Lightering Task Force (PWS-OW-3), nearshore sensitive area booming and recovery (PWS- NS-1C, 1D, and 1E), the use of Jitneys (PWS-NS-3), the on-shore tactics, the In-situ burning tactics (PWS-NM-3) and other Wildlife, Waste Management, and Logistical tactics.

Fishing Vessels

The number of exercises available for fishing vessel participation has been diminishing. Having fishing vessels under contract and prepared to respond are critical to an effective response. Fishing vessels need to be included in most of the exercises discussed above. SERVS has been trying to entice more fishing vessels to participate in its program. However, trying to maintain a response-ready fleet is difficult when most of the vessels are only allowed to train once a year. If more exercises were conducted annually, participation within the program would likely increase. Having one two-day drill for a given Tier I vessel would likely provide more value than two one-day trainings. If fishing vessels were required to train away from their port for a two-day period, more elements of an actual response could be incorporated and more time with the response equipment would be allowed.

Tanker-Towing Exercises

In 2009, all of the towing exercises were again conducted in the summer. It is good to see SERVS increasing the number of towing exercises and including testing all elements required to stop and then tow the tanker. However, the towing exercises should be conducted throughout the year so tug crews can practice responding in all conditions that occur during normal tanker transits in both summer and winter.

Testing New Systems

In 2008, the Prince William Sound Shippers began looking at possible improvements to the open water oil recovery systems used in Prince William Sound. Recently, the fifth and probably final test for the Crucial Oleophilic offshore disk skimmer at the OHMSETT facility in New Jersey was completed. The next logical step is to work in incorporating the new skimmer with other open water barge components that will need to be used together to make a complete open water recovery system. The main reasons for refining the skimming capacity is the current high capacity skimmers, TransRec, is an older, foreign-manufactured skimmer which was becoming more expensive to maintain; and switching from a Weir skimmer to an Oleophilic disk skimmer would pump much less water, creating less emulsified oil, thus reducing the storage capacity needs of the response system.

Dispersant vs. Mechanical Cleanup Drills

PWSRCAC does not support dispersant use as an oil spill response option in the waters of our region. However, it is recognized from the number of drills that focus on the approval process for using dispersants that dispersants will likely be approved as a spill response option. With this being the case, it is recommended that a dispersant exercise be conducted that tests the whole dispersant approval process. A no-notice exercise should be called in order to determine the time required to have the command post established and the decision process run through the Alaska Regional Response Team (ARRT). The ARRT should not have prior knowledge of when this exercise is taking place. This exercise should also include the unannounced deployment of the resources necessary to carry out the application of the dispersants including the C-130, King Air, helicopters with spray bucket, and on-water monitoring teams. Once all of these issues have been reviewed and resolved, could the focus can then shift to drills that use mechanical cleanup elements necessary to meet the response planning standards for the contingency plans.

Wildlife Exercise

This past year a full deployment exercise of a wildlife task force as described in the SERVS Technical Manual was deployed. There were several valuable lessons learned from that exercise including capturing and transporting simulated wildlife, communication issues, and need field implementation plans. It is recommended that another exercise be conducted to follow-up on these lessons learned and also include the transportation of captured simulated wildlife to Valdez Marine Terminal's stabilization facilities.