

2005 Marine Firefighting Symposium Final Report

Respectfully submitted by,
Capt. Jeff Johnson and Capt. John Taylor, Event Coordinators

Planning for the 2005 Marine Firefighting Symposium began in October 2003 at the end of the last marine firefighting symposium. Capt. Jeff Johnson and Capt. John Taylor, coordinators of both symposiums, started laying the foundation for this year's symposium using their experiences in 2003 along with the attendee's evaluations. The results have set the bar even higher than expected.

Once again, we are pleased to report that the Marine Firefighting Symposium has been a resounding success. Months of planning preceded the actual event, which was instrumental in minimizing unexpected problems. We planned for most contingencies and every potential problem was averted during the symposium.

The first potential problem was in getting all the instructors to Valdez. The day the instructors were to fly in, Alaska Airlines delayed or cancelled most flights. This caused the instructors to arrive about 12 hours later than planned, and since they had planned to arrive two days before the start of the symposium, this delay had no effect on their preparation.

Another glitch, which was expected and planned for, was the last minute agenda adjustment due to the availability of the oil tanker, Polar Endeavor. The ship exercise was originally planned for the third day of the symposium but the ship was only available on the second day. Like I mentioned, this was something that we knew could happen and we

planned for it. The exercise went off without any problems on the second day of the symposium.

Unlike 2003, the weather was not an issue in 2005. By changing the month to May instead of October, we were able to enjoy some beautiful weather and not worry as much about flight cancellations. In 2003, we had to charter a bus to drive some of the attendee's from Anchorage because the Valdez airport was closed for much of the time.

Observations

Putting on an event like this requires a lot of hard work and cooperation. This symposium could not have been possible without certain people and entities that assisted in the success of this year's symposium and they should be recognized. First and foremost the **PWSRCAC** should be recognized and thanked for sponsoring this event once again. The fire service needs this kind of support to help prepare for maritime incidents. Without this symposium, training in this area would be overlooked.

Besides the event coordinators and instructors who provided their experience and expertise, things would not have seemed so effortless without the tireless efforts of **Rhonda Williams**. She managed the logistical needs of the event including getting everyone to Valdez and taking care of them while there.

Other acknowledgements for outstanding community partnership must go to **ConocoPhillips Marine Polar Tankers, Inc.** for providing us with an incredible training opportunity by allowing us nearly unlimited access to the vessel Polar Endeavor for our ship exercise. Also, **Crowley Marine Services** for participating in the ship exercise by providing 3 tugs to interface with the fire service providing a realistic response to a simulated incident. Crowley also provided a member of their salvage response team to

participate in the roundtable discussion on proposed federal regulation for marine firefighting. Once again, the **Southwest Alaska Pilots Association (SWAPA)** provided us with Emerald Island to use for our small boat exercise. This exercise has been a favorite among the attendees and would not be possible without SWAPA's generous contribution. Another thank you should go to **Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.** for their cooperation and contribution of firefighting equipment used at the exercises. **The Department of Emergency Services** once again provided financial assistance to those who wanted to attend. This assistance allowed for participation from outside RCAC's area of responsibility, enhancing the opportunities for those attending to meet and discuss issues with other fire agencies. We would like to recognize **the City of Valdez** and **The Valdez Fire Department** who not only participated in the event, but provided equipment and personnel for the exercises.

Attendance this year was on par with what was expected. We had fewer attendees from the industry side, but that was expected. We did not have a breakout session on tank farm incidents as we did in 2003 and that could account for a smaller number of industry representatives. Once again, the attendees displayed professionalism throughout the symposium. They stayed engaged in the training and performed with skill during the hands on portions.

We had tremendous industry participation with regards to offering assistance with in-kind services such as vessel access. Without this kind of cooperation we would be hard pressed to offer realistic exercises to reinforce the training component.

We were able to accomplish a great deal of training in three short days. We did this through extensive planning and flexibility. Everyone involved in planning and

executing this symposium share a similar training philosophy and understanding of the needs and requirements of an event like this. We created plans for the training sessions and activities, as well as back up plans for any changes that needed to be made as the event progressed. This was the case when the vessel “Polar Endeavour” was only available to us on the second day of the symposium. We had originally planned for the ship exercise to be on the third day but easily made the necessary changes without any disruption to the flow of the symposium.

Considerations for Future Symposiums

The evaluations and observations of the instruction team suggest that additional days for the symposium should be considered. We worked very hard to meet our objectives in the three days of the symposium. In order to do this we had to ask the attendees to start early and stay late. We met our objectives but received feedback from attendees that we should add days in order to slow the pace and spend more time on certain topics. Some things we cannot control but others we can. It would be helpful to add a day or two to the symposium or reduce the class offerings and focus on fewer objectives during the three days.

Another consideration for 2007 came to light while meeting with the COTP and in subsequent discussions. The USCG will be conducting a mandated security exercise in 2007 and would like to coordinate it with the 2007 Marine Firefighting Symposium. I think that it would be a good fit, as it would provide a security piece to the maritime response toolbox.

Recommendations to Participants

We continue to urge all agencies to seek out partnerships and mutual aid agreements that will enhance their ability to respond to an incident should one occur in their jurisdiction. No singular agency will have the resources to combat a large-scale marine incident, however by creating partnerships access to resources increases.

We also recommend that all fire agencies become familiar with the proposed USCG regulations on marine firefighting and salvage. As mentioned at the symposium, these regulations are due to be implemented no later than early 2007 and could have an effect on the local fire service. Information on these regulations can be found at DMS.DOT.GOV (docket #3417). If you would like my input on this issue or have a question please contact me at jeff.johnson@ci.vancouver.wa.us and I will be happy to share what I know.

Evaluation Comments

The following is a sample of the comments received from those who attended. Each attendee was asked to fill out an evaluation. The evaluation consisted of two parts, a section for each segment of the symposium using the Likert scale of 1-5, 5 being the best and another section of the evaluation consisting of six written questions regarding the symposium.

Thirty-six evaluations were returned. I took the first portion and averaged the point totals for each segment. The results are provided below. For the second portion I've provided a sampling of responses to the questions posed to the attendees.

Introduction to Shipboard Firefighting for Land Based Firefighters:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.72

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.53

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 4.46

Roundtable Discussion of Proposed Federal Regulations on Marine Firefighting:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.14

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.06

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 3.79

Initial Engine Company Actions:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.46

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.34

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 4.34

Shipboard Firefighting Exercise:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.47

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.31

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 4.35

Understanding Fire Plans and Vessel Familiarization:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.49

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.29

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 4.23

Small Boats & Marina Fires/Small Boat Exercise:

Instructor Knowledge/Objective Clarity = 4.61

Instructor Knowledge/Objectives Met = 4.56

Overheads, Videos & Visual Resources = 4.37

Overall Rating of the Course:

Sequence of each segment = 4.34

Length of each segment = 4.00

Instructional method = 4.37

Value to me = 4.40

- 1) Please provide some comments on the overall rating of the symposium.**
 - All of the instructors were excellent.
 - The symposium is very helpful.
 - Would like to build on what we've learned next year.
 - This was an excellent experience.
 - Instructor knowledge impressive, warm, friendly and professional.
 - Well planned.
 - Fantastic!
 - High quality instructors.
 - Class portion a bit too long.
 - Well organized, subject matter pertinent.
 - Should be a weeklong.
 - More time.

- 2) How do you think the course could be improved?**
 - A little more time and more exercises.
 - More days
 - Live fire
 - More exercises.
 - More time.

- 3) Please comment on the facilities the course was provided in:**
 - Excellent
 - Lecture was dark
 - Wonderful
 - Clean and comfortable
 - Screen could be higher

- 4) Subject areas that should be added or expanded on:**
 - Deciphering ship plans
 - Dealing with ships crew
 - More visual training like tours and walk throughs
 - Dewatering
 - Command and control and fire boat operations
 - Tactics
 - Foam application

- 5) How often would you like to see the Marine Firefighting Symposium offered?**
 - Once a year
 - Every year
 - Twice a year
 - Annually
 - Every 2 or 3 years
 - More often
 - Yearly

6) Additional comments:

Lots of hands-on was great
Instructors were very knowledgeable
Great job by all
The ships Captain and crew were very helpful
Move to a more advanced level
Very realistic
Awesome class! You all did a great job
I would like to attend again
Thank you
Needs to be longer

Conclusion

The 2005 Marine Firefighting Symposium has been another successful training event. It was well attended and the feedback from those who attended was very positive.

We used the evaluations from the 2003 symposium to help guide us in preparing this year's event. We included more hands on exercises and spent fewer hours in a classroom setting. I feel that we have carefully balanced training and exercises in order to meet our objectives. By building on the success of the 2003 symposium we were able to offer more hands on without sacrificing learned knowledge that would usually come from the classroom. Classroom training was offered as necessary and we used the hands on portions to reinforce what was taught. I feel we reached an appropriate balance of training vs. exercise that enhanced the learning experience of all who attended.

The United States Coast Guard's attendance once again reinforces the importance of this symposium. Their interest in coordinating their exercise in 2007 with the marine firefighting symposium offers an additional component that should prove interesting and important to anyone who attends. It is our hope that the RCAC will continue to sponsor this event and suggest that the next symposium be held in 2007 in coordination with the USCG exercise.

These symposiums have set a high standard for quality and relevance, needed to continue offering important opportunities like this to the local fire service.