

# Contingency Plans

FACT SHEET

## What is a contingency plan?

An oil spill contingency plan, or “c-plan,” is a document which contains detailed instructions about prevention and response activities to be done before, during, and after an oil spill.

**Preventing an oil spill is the most effective strategy to protecting human health and the environment.** If an oil spill occurs, however, it is necessary that a systematic and well-organized approach be taken to quickly contain and control a spill. Responding efficiently and effectively to a spill requires that planning for a response be done ahead of time.

C-plans contain information about:

- Emergency actions and notifications that must be taken in the event of a spill
- Comprehensive explanations of response organization and chain-of-command structures
- Detailed information about the facility or tank vessel.

Each plan must show that enough equipment and personnel are available to respond, and that the oil industry uses the best available technology in preparations for oil spill response.

By law, a tank vessel or oil facility cannot operate without an approved c-plan.

## C-Plan Renewal Process

Owners and operators of facilities or tank vessels are required to submit c-plans to regulating agencies for approval. The agencies review the c-plan, and if it meets applicable laws and regulations, the plan gets approved.

By state and/or federal regulations, industry c-plans must be renewed on a scheduled basis, typically every five years, or if there is a significant change in operations. The renewal process provides the public and the council an opportunity to voice concerns and propose revisions for improvements.

Through this process, the plans are modified based on what has been learned since the last review period.

## The council's role in contingency planning

As mandated by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and our contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, one of the council's prime responsibilities is to review oil spill contingency plans in light of changing circumstances and new technological developments.

The council:

- Reviews plans during review periods
- Observes drills and exercises
- Makes recommendations for improvements
- Participates in workgroups
- Develops projects that look at ways to improve oil spill prevention and response

This role is important because it provides a voice in the decision making process for the local people who have the most to lose from another major oil spill. Involving

people from the region with local knowledge of resources at risk allows for more trust and also fosters long-term partnerships between industry, government, and local communities.

When Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 they recorded that that many people believe that complacency on the part of the industry and government was one of the contributing factors to the Exxon Valdez oil spill and that only when local citizens are involved in the process will the trust develop that is necessary to change the present system from confrontation to consensus.



**For more information, contact project manager Linda Swiss, [swiss@pwsrca.org](mailto:swiss@pwsrca.org), or visit: [www.pwsrca.org/programs/oil-spill-prevention/contingency-plans/](http://www.pwsrca.org/programs/oil-spill-prevention/contingency-plans/)**

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council ~ Citizens promoting environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.



VALDEZ: PO Box 3089 / 130 S. Meals, Ste 202, Valdez AK 99686 ~ toll-free: 877.478.7221 ph: 907.834.5000 fax: 907.835.5926  
ANCHORAGE: 3709 Spenard Rd., Ste. 100, Anchorage AK 99503 ~ toll-free: 800.478.7221 ph: 907.277.7222 fax: 907.277.4523

[www.pwsrca.org](http://www.pwsrca.org)