Drill Monitoring Annual Report

2006

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Date	Report Number	Drill Description – Author
5-Jan	752.431.060105	SEABULK ARCTIC Emergency Towing Exercise -- Roy Robertson
1-Feb	752.431.060201	Cordova One-Hour Fishing Vessel Drill -- Roy Robertson
15-Feb	752.431.060215	Port Valdez Nearshore Exercise -- Roy Robertson
10-June	752.431.060610	Captain H.A. Downing Emergency Towing Exercise – Bill Abbott
11-Jul	752.431.060711	Seal Rocks Valdez Workboat Drill -- Roy Robertson
18-Jul	752.431.060718	Valdez Marine Terminal Scenario 5 Staffing Drill -- Roy Robertson
9-Sept	752.431.060930	SeaRiver Baytown Emergency Towing Exercise – Bill Abbott
26-Sept	752.431.060926	SeaRiver Maritime Prince William Sound Tabletop Exercise -- Roy Robertson
2-Nov	752.431.061102	Whittier U/J Oil Recovery Tactic Training -- Roy Robertson
7-Nov	752.431.061107	Cordova U/J Oil Recovery Tactic Training -- Roy Robertson
29-Nov	752.431.061129	Valdez Marine Terminal Scenario 5 Waste Staging Drill -- Roy Robertson
12-Dec	752.431.061214	SeaRiver Sierra Emergency Towing Exercise – Bill Abbott
13-Dec	752.431.061213	Valdez U/J Oil Recovery Tactic Training -- Roy Robertson

2006 Drill Summary

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) staff observed and evaluated 13 drills and exercise in 2006. In addition to the drills and exercises, the PWSRCAC staff also participated in SERVS' 2006 spring and fall fishing vessel trainings. All of these reports fall into the categories described below.

Tanker Towing Exercises

SERVS normally conducts four tanker-towing exercises per year. These towing exercises are usually divided between the four shippers (SeaRiver, Polar Tankers, Alaska Tanker Company, and Seabulk) calling on the Valdez Marine Terminal. The PWSRCAC staff observed four of these exercises in 2006. All of the exercises went well and no significant problems were noted. Two of these exercises were conducted during the winter months, which has potential for more significant sea conditions than summer exercises. However, neither of the winter exercises could be viewed as being conducted in adverse weather.

Open Water Response Exercises

In 2006, PWSRCAC staff attended two open water exercises. The most significant exercise was a semi-no-notice drill conducted on July 11 requiring four of SERVS' Valdez based workboats to go to Seal Rocks to meet two of the TransRec barges and deploy the skimmers and boom. This exercise was a follow-up exercise to the August 23, 2005, drill that identified the inability of the tugs and barges to safely launch their workboats in marginal or adverse weather. The SERVS' Valdez-based workboats are part of the system SERVS uses to meet its response time requirements for a Seal Rocks scenario.

The July 11 exercise demonstrated that the workboats from Valdez could arrive on-scene at Seal Rocks and effectively tow boom for the TransRec barges until relieved by bigger fishing vessels.

SERVS' primary response option for the initial boom deployment of the open water barges at Seal Rocks is the Cordova Rapid Response Fleet that consists of 12 bowpickers. These vessels are expected to be underway from the Cordova boat harbor within one hour. SERVS must have four of these vessels to meet their initial operational requirements for the open water taskforces.

The other open water exercise was another semi-no-notice drill conducted on February 1 to test the responsiveness of the Cordova Rapid Response Fleet. This drill consisted of representatives from SERVS, RPG, ADEC, and PWSRCAC arriving in Cordova and calling out all 12 vessels in the Rapid Response Fleet. The vessel's crews reported to the Cordova District Fishermen United building. Once all vessels were present, inspections were conducted of their vessels and a debriefing was held. All 12 of the fishing vessels that were called out met their one-hour requirement. However, several of the vessels would have needed to top off their fuel tanks before departing.

Nearshore Response Exercises

Nearshore exercises have been a focus of SERVS during 2006. Most of these nearshore exercises were used to work on nearshore response tactics that were amended into the Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan. This amendment included a shift from the standard "U" recovery formation to a "U/J" oil recovery formation.

These exercises have demonstrated the fishing vessels still need more training and practice to become proficient in the deployment of the "U/J" tactic. SERVS began conducting classroom training to go along with the field deployment exercises. These classroom discussions were valuable but weather hindered most of the following day's exercises in Whittier and Cordova.

Another focus of the nearshore exercises is the use of fishing vessel captains as Taskforce and Strike Team Leaders. SERVS is now selecting fishing vessel captains for each of their nearshore exercises to perform the role of Taskforce Leaders. Generally, the fishermen assigned as Taskforce Leaders have done a great job. However, only limited amount of the responsibilities of a Taskforce Leader can be practiced during a four to six hour exercise.

Valdez Marine Terminal Drills

The Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) conducted two exercises that were observed by PWSRCAC staff during 2006. The tabletop drill in July 2006 focused on the staffing of VMT's worst-case scenario for the first 72 hours. In addition to demonstrating that Alyeska could provide adequate staffing numbers, the training required to perform each of the response roles was verified for each staff member.

The second VMT exercise for 2006 consisted of laying out a waste-handling site at the VMT. The waste-handling site included space for drop boxes, contaminated soils, drums, decontamination area, and security. This site was pre-staged and set up prior to the participants arriving but heavy equipment was brought to the site to demonstrate the ability to operate within the site boundaries.

Other Exercises

SeaRiver Maritime conducted a large two-day tabletop exercise in September of 2006. A third day was used to conduct a debriefing with all of the participants. This exercise was dispersant driven with the response focusing on the "surgical" application of the dispersants. The scenario provided for a 15,000-barrel spill that the open water recovery

systems could not control in 2-foot seas. The other objectives for the exercise included transitioning from SERVS to SeaRiver Incident Management Teams and exercising the Joint Information Center.

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. SERVS conducted these three-day spring fishing vessel-training programs in Kodiak, Homer, Seward, Cordova, Whittier, Chenega, and Valdez in 2006. SERVS also held a fall fishing vessel training in Cordova and Homer. More than 350 vessels and over 1,000 spill responders were trained by SERVS in 2006.

Focus of Future Drills and Exercises

There are several areas that need to be tracked in 2007. The following issues need to be addressed and tested because the Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan must be resubmitted in 2007 and VMT Contingency Plan is up for review in 2008.

Initial Open Water Response

SERVS has conducted drills to demonstrate the ability to have the Valdez-based workboats go to Seal Rocks to deploy and tow boom from the open water barges. The Cordova Rapid Response Fleet has been tested to ensure they have the ability to get underway within one hour. The next step would be to actually send the Cordova Rapid Response Fleet to work with the TransRec barges at Seal Rocks.

Nearshore Tactics

The nearshore operations are now relying on the Current Busters and the U/J boom configuration for free oil recovery. The Current Busters have proven to be a valuable addition to the nearshore operation. The U/J tactic still needs more work for this to become a reliable oil recovery tactic. Most of the vessels deploying this tactic have trouble with maintaining the proper speed and formation while conducting many operational responsibilities. The tactic requires one vessel to implement many operations at the same time. The skimming vessels must tow boom, operate the skimmer, load the mini-barge, and decant the mini-barge while trying to stay in the oil, in formation with other vessels, and keep the lines and hoses out of its wheel.

While the U/J tactic can be effective for oil recovery, it is more complex than the previous “U” or Teardrop tactics. Many of the fishermen have voiced that they prefer the other tactics for safety and operations considerations. The vessels need to be properly matched and many of the vessels have trouble towing the heavier Ro-Boom. Using the smaller CSI boom reduces the sea states in which this tactic can be implemented effectively. Since this tactic is not going to be changed, much more training and practice time is needed for the fishing vessels.

Fishing Vessel Training

As the fishing vessels and crews are asked to perform more roles each year, the training must keep up for them to be successful. The amount of training opportunities needs to be increased.

SERVS has come to rely on the fishing vessel captains to fill the roles of Taskforce Leaders (TFL) and Strike Team Leaders (STL) with very little specific training to help them learn the responsibilities of these roles. Spending part of the day acting as a TFL does not prepare them for all of the responsibilities required to perform this role during a response. SERVS should develop a criteria based program to ensure the Taskforce and Strike Team Leaders are adequately trained to perform these roles.

Additional exercises need to be conducted to allow the fishing vessels to become proficient in operating in a "U/J" oil recovery formation. SERVS also needs to determine which vessels can be used to deploy this tactic and which vessels should be assigned other tasks.

Tier III Fishing Vessel Program

SERVS has been working with the Prince William Sound Community College to develop its Tier III Fishing Vessel Program. This is the method that SERVS will use to train and contract with vessels of opportunity during a spill response. Instructors are being identified to deliver training to the crews of the vessels of opportunity. A drill should be conducted to test SERVS' ability to identify available vessels and deliver quality training in the communities that SERVS will be recruiting additional vessels.

VMT Incident Command Organization

Alyeska conducted a staffing drill in 2006. This drill demonstrated that Alyeska could staff a worst-case response for the first 72-hours with trained personnel. However, several positions that are usually associated with the standard ICS organizations were not included in the VMT organization. These positions include the Deputy Section Chiefs for Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance. The Deputy Section Chiefs provide an invaluable role of helping manage each of the sections while the Section Chiefs are attending meetings or press briefings.

The VMT could better test its organization and provide a better learning experience for its Incident Management Team by conducting exercises that do not follow the scenarios that are included in the VMT contingency plan.

Tanker-Towing Exercises

The shippers and SERVS conducted two of the four towing exercises during the winter months in 2006. This was an encouraging change from conducting all of the towing exercise during the summer months. A good follow-up for these exercises would be to conduct some of the exercise in a moderate sea state of 5 to 8 feet.

Major Drills Planned for 2007

Valdez Marine Terminal

The Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) has two drills schedule for 2007. One of the drills is based on the Scenario 5 response for the settlement ponds. The fall 2007 drill will focus on sensitive area protection.

BP Drill

BP will conduct a three-day exercise in May of 2007. This exercise will focus on the Tier III fishing vessel training, transition of spill management from SERVS to BP, Regional Stakeholders Committee and Community Liaison involvement, and field deployment of nearshore equipment.