

Drill Monitoring Annual Report

2010

Prepared By: Roy Robertson
Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council

2010 Drill Report Index

Date	Number	Drill Description
Jan 1	752.431.100112	Crowley Personnel Activation Exercise
Mar 16	752.431.100316	Cordova Nearshore & Open Water Exercise
April 21	752.431.100421	Valdez Marine Terminal Spring Exercise
June 7	752.431.100607	SeaRiver External and PWSRCAC Internal Exercise
July 15	752.431.100715	T/V Alaskan Frontier Emergency Towing Exercise
July 23	752.431.100723	Valdez Marine Terminal No-Notice Drill Date Audit Report
Sept 2	752.431.100902	Port Valdez Lightering Barge Exercise
Sept 27	752.431.100927	T/V Sierra Emergency Towing Exercise
Oct 5	752.431.101005	T/V Alaskan Navigator Emergency Towing Exercise
Oct 6	752.431.101006	Valdez Marine Terminal Fall Exercise
Oct 10	752.431.101010	Port Fidalgo Unannounced Nearshore Drill
Nov 15	752.431.101115	Port Valdez Readiness Exercise

2010 Drill Summary

Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) staff observed and evaluated 12 drills and exercises in 2010. In addition to the drills and exercises, PWSRCAC staff also participated in Alyeska's Ship Escort/Response Vessel System (SERVS) 2010 fishing vessel trainings. All of these reports fall into the categories described below.

Tanker Towing Exercises

SERVS conducted eight tanker emergency towing exercises in 2010. These exercises were conducted throughout the summer and early fall months with the last one on October 5, 2010. The exercises followed the same format as the previous three 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. Most of the towing exercises that were observed went very well. The one exception was the T/V Sierra exercise, which had a line winch failure after the ship was arrested and the crew tried to connect the towline. This caused a delay but the line was connected after some additional maneuvering.

Open Water Response Exercises

PWSRCAC staff attended four exercises that deployed open water task force equipment. Both of the Valdez Marine Terminal exercises included open water task force deployments of the Valdez Star. The April exercise included the TransRec Barge 450-8. SERVS has also conducted readiness exercises out of Cordova and Valdez that include deployments of the TransRec Barges.

Nearshore Response Exercises

Staff observed and wrote three nearshore exercise reports in 2010. The biggest deployment exercise in many years was an unannounced nearshore drill in Port Fidalgo during October. This was a 72-hour exercise that required the deployment of three nearshore task forces and the vessels that are needed to support that operation. Many lessons were learned from this drill and planning is under way to conduct another similar drill in 2011.

In March, SERVS conducted a combination nearshore/open water exercise in Cordova. This exercise incorporated fishing vessels that would be assigned to open water barges and allowed these fishing vessels to practice with the barges and vessels that would typically be assigned to the nearshore task forces.

SERVS conducted a series of Geographic Response Strategy deployments that were observed by PWSRCAC OSPR Committee member Jerry Brookman. These were larger deployments conducted from August 17 to 22 and tested strategies to protect sensitive areas including Fairmount Island, Lone Island, Fool Island, and Agnes Island. Jerry wrote a detailed trip report that was presented to the OSPR Committee. John LeClair, another OSPR Committee member, participated in the October nearshore drill and provided valuable input on the evaluation of that drill.

Valdez Marine Terminal Drills

The Valdez Marine Terminal (VMT) had three exercises this past year. Two drills were planned, and one drill was an unannounced personnel drill. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation conducted the unannounced drill on July 23 to test the availability of qualified personnel to fill out the response organization described in the contingency plan. It was found that Alyeska was unable to put trained personnel in all of the ICS roles as described in the plan.

The two planned drills built on each other in a response to a 90,000 barrel spill at Berth 5. The first drill occurred in April and the second one was held in October. The first drill covered the initial response from the local VMT response team. The drill ended when the initial command post personnel developed an ICS 201 initial response form and handed the response over to a larger response team assembled at the SERVS Valdez Emergency Operations Center. This exercise included equipment deployments of the Port of Valdez Duck Flats and Solomon Gulch Hatchery as well as two Open Water Task Force Deployments. This exercise went very well. The second exercise started where the first one ended and ran through the first operational period and ended with a shift briefing for the second operational period.

Other Exercises

SeaRiver Maritime conducted the 2010 large shipper's exercise that lasted for two days. As in previous exercises, the first day began with SERVS managing the response and then transitioning the spill management responsibility to SeaRiver. The scenario was a collision between a SeaRiver tanker and a cargo ship. PWSRCAC staff took this opportunity to use this exercise to conduct our own internal exercise to practice how we would use the recently revised PWSRCAC response plan. The majority of staff were involved with gathering information from the SeaRiver exercise and distributing that information to the Board of Directors and the various committees. This information was used to discuss what actions would be taken during an actual event and develop our concerns and issues that were then passed back into the SeaRiver exercise through our seat on the Regional Stakeholders Committee.

There was a personnel activation drill conducted by Crowley Marine and SERVS that was loosely associated with the SeaRiver exercise. This exercise demonstrated Crowley Marine's ability to contact and make arrangements for all of the qualified personnel needed to back fill all field response positions for the on-water and nearshore task forces within the timeframes presented in the Prince William Sound Tanker Contingency Plan. This drill also went well.

SERVS Fishing Vessel Training

In 2010, the SERVS fishing vessel program was in serious trouble as the number of trained response ready vessels dropped below the amount required to conduct the initial in-region response described in the PWS Tanker Contingency Plan. There was discussion of vessels under contract not participating in any drills if the issues raised by the contracted fishing vessels were not addressed. Alyeska did address the compensation package for its fishing vessel programs participants and agreed to work on other outstanding issues over the next year. This action allowed fishing vessel trainings and recruitments to move ahead resulting in increased participation and the numbers of trained fishing vessels going back up. SERVS subsequently conducted three-day fishing vessel training programs in Kodiak, Homer, Seward, Cordova, Whittier, Chenega, and Valdez.

Focus of Future Drills and Exercises

Similar to recommendations from 2009, there are several areas that are recommended for 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

Based on sunrise and sunset tables, during half of the year there is less than 12 hours of daylight in Prince William Sound. Having the ability to respond to a spill during darkness is not an option, it should be a requirement. Open water exercises over the past few years have indicated that more practice is needed for not only the tug and barge crews but also the fishing vessels that are needed to tow the boom. Working in darkness will also be required in the nearshore response if the planning assumption of the nearshore task forces being operational for 12 hours a day is to

be viewed as realistic. While there is agreement that some activities may be unsafe to perform in darkness in the nearshore environment, not all of the tactics used for nearshore should be excluded during hours of darkness. At a minimum, procedures should be developed to fully maximize the amount of daylight that is available. PWSRCAC recommends that more training be conducted with fishing vessels during periods of darkness.

Unannounced Exercises

Since December 2009, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation has conducted three major unannounced drills. All of drills have provided valuable lessons learned that likely would have not been recognized without the snapshot in time that can only be provided by an unannounced drill.

This past year a no notice personnel verification drill was conducted with the Valdez Marine Terminal on July 23 that indicated for at least that day Alyeska could not provide enough trained personnel fill out their 72-hour response team. Alyeska experienced a lot of turnover recently and has been subject to downsizing so the unannounced drill was needed to see how that has affected their ability to respond to a spill. Another unannounced follow-up personnel drill is needed to verify that the trained personnel shortage has been corrected.

The other major unannounced drill conducted in 2010 was a nearshore drill in October that illuminated problems with staffing, training, equipment, and procedures used to activate fishing vessels and perform the nearshore tactics described in the PWS Tanker Oil Spill Contingency Plan. This drill will be conducted again in the spring of 2011 to determine if improvements have been made to problem areas.

Based on the results and the lessons learned from the last three unannounced drills, these types of drill should be continued on a yearly basis to continue spot checking the overall response system.

Field Source Control Exercise

PWSRCAC recommends that source control be the focus of either the Valdez Marine Terminal or the PWS Tanker Plan for a field exercise. Source control has not been the focus of a drill for a long time. The VMT and the PWS Shippers have in the past simulated source control. A drill focusing on the potential manual operation of source control at the VMT would be a good refresher. On the tanker side, having the lightering barge actually tie up to a tanker and deploy equipment to ensure all of the fittings, pumps, and procedures for the new tankers is recommended.

SERVS Technical Manual Tactics

As indicated in past annual drill reports, PWSRCAC recommends testing the tactics contained in SERVS Technical Manual. 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 are recommended be tested 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 in (PWS-NS-3), the

on-shore tactics, the In-situ burning tactics in (PWS-NM-3) and other Wildlife, Waste Management, and Logistical tactics contained in the Technical Manual.

Fishing Vessels

Two of the big lessons learned from the October unannounced nearshore drill involved issues related to activating fishing vessels from homeports. Activation of fishing vessels during this exercise demonstrated that Fishing Vessel Administrators (FVA) would be overwhelmed during an actual response as the FVAs lack the staffing needed to adequately provide all of the information requested by SERVS and fishing vessel owners. Another issue is the availability of trained crews to man all of the vessels during the offseason in fall and winter. It is recommended that a drill be conducted to determine if these issues have been resolved.

Tanker-Towing Exercises

During 2010, the emergency towing exercises were conducted into early October. This is later on the calendar than the past few years. It is good to see SERVS continuing the number of towing exercises that includes testing all elements required to stop and then tow tankers. However, the towing exercises should be conducted throughout the year so the tug crews can practice responding in all of the conditions that occur during normal tanker transits in both summer and winter.

Nearshore Exercises

The nearshore drill conducted in October 2010 demonstrated deficiencies in SERVS' training exercises in that fishermen had not been filling mini-barges and operating decanting pumps among other tasks that would be required of them during a real response. The nearshore exercises need to be more realistic by requiring fishermen to respond to a scenario rather than just towing equipment around. Fishermen should be used to deploy sensitive area tactics, and decontamination procedures should be exercised. It is also recommended that Tier I vessels be required to perform two exercises back-to-back which include staying out overnight to not only give them more time with the equipment and tactics, but to add realism and push Tier I vessels to consider all of the aspects of a response that will be required.