

Inspecting Facilities for Substantial Risk



Ecology regulates and inspects oil refineries, terminals, and oil-handling facilities to help prevent oil spills and protect Washington’s environment.

Contact

Prevention Section
Spill Prevention,
Preparedness, & Response
Program
Department of Ecology
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Inspection information:
ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Compliance-enforcement/Facility-spills-prevention-inspections

Accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6831 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Ecology’s Spills Program helps prevent oil spills by inspecting refineries, oil terminals, and oil-handling facilities

Facility inspections are a key component of our spill prevention program. We conduct routine facility inspections to ensure use of good operating practices and compliance with our rules ([Chapter 173-180 WAC, Facility Oil Handling Standards](#)).

Ecology also reviews and approves plans and manuals as required by WAC 173-180. Depending on the type of facility, this may include operations manuals, training and certification programs, safe and effective threshold determination reports, and prevention plans. Refer to the WAC for more details.

What facilities does Ecology regulate?

We inspect Class 1, 2, 3, and 4 facilities, which are defined as:

Class	Definition
Class 1	Refineries and marine oil-handling terminals.
Class 2	Railroad car, motor vehicle, or other rolling stock, while not in transport, used to transfer oil to a non-recreational vessel.
Class 3	Facilities that transfer to a non-recreational vessel with a capacity of 10,500 gallons of oil or more.
Class 4	Marina boatyards, marine fueling outlets or other fueling installations that transfer to a non-recreational vessel with a capacity of less than 10,500 gallons of oil, but don’t transfer oil in bulk to or from a tank vessel, pipeline, railcar, or other rolling stock.

What do we look for?

Class 1 facilities

Refinery and marine oil-handling terminal owners and operators can expect our inspectors to reach out to them each year to arrange a site inspection, which typically takes several hours to conduct. We employ a team of licensed, professional engineers who have experience working in and with the oil industry to carry out our Class 1 facility inspections.

We inspect each facility and their oil-handling operations for compliance with their state-approved plans and our rule, particularly the Class 1 facility design standards called out in the rule.

These inspections usually involve:

- **On-site review** of the facility's inspection, maintenance, and training records for all oil-handling equipment, including piping and storage tanks.
- **Visual examination** of dock operations and equipment, transfer pipeline systems, above-ground storage tanks, and secondary containment measures.
- **On-site discussions** between inspectors and facility staff at the time of the inspection.
- **Follow-up written correspondence** to document findings and recommendations.

During annual inspections and throughout the year, our licensed professional engineers work with the regulated community to provide technical assistance with proper implementation of Washington's spill prevention rules. We collaborate with facility operators on innovative ways to work towards a common goal of preventing oil spills.

Class 2 and 3 facilities

We inspect transfer operations at Class 2 and 3 facilities to ensure ongoing compliance with state requirements for oil transfer facilities. These inspections are commonly referred to as transfer inspections. Transfer inspections are relatively short in duration and involve assessments of transfer equipment condition, maintenance and training records, and on-site operations.

For Class 2 facilities, the state-approved operations manual and training and certification program are

also reviewed to determine the compliance status of the facility. (There are presently no state requirements for these documents at Class 3 facilities.) Site inspections associated with plan or program reviews are generally connected to the review and approval process, and are typically arranged with facility owners and operators ahead of the site visit.

Class 4 facilities

An annual inspection is also conducted at each Class 4 facility. These inspections are typically arranged beforehand by our inspectors and are relatively short in duration.

Our main areas of focus are:

- Condition and status of oil transfer equipment.
- Response and recovery equipment.
- Training records.
- Spill notification information.

Our inspectors will meet with site supervisors to review any issues and may send a letter detailing significant issues that are found during the inspection.

More information

[Chapter 173-180 WAC, Facility oil standards rule](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-180)

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-180>

[Delivering facility transfer checklist](https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/ecy070283.html)

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/ecy070283.html>

[Advance Notice of Transfer \(ANT\) system](https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Reporting-requirements/Advance-notice-of-oil-transfer)

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Reporting-requirements/Advance-notice-of-oil-transfer>

[Class 4 inspection checklist](https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/ecy070313.html)

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