



Focus on Preparedness

from Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program (Spills)

Overview

The 1990 Oil and Hazardous Substance Spills Act, amended by the 1991 Oil Spill Prevention Act, requires plan holders to prepare for their worst case spill by conducting drills, pre-positioning equipment and training personnel. The statute directs the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to develop rules, which set minimum standards for facilities, and vessel contingency plans and primary response contractors in order to prepare and respond to oil spills in Washington State.



Spokane River boom deployment.

Contingency Planning

Companies who handle or transports crude oil or refined oil products as cargo must have a government-approved contingency plan for preventing and responding to spills. This plan is a written document that describes how the company will respond to an oil spill, train their personnel, and what equipment they will have access to in case of a spill. The requirements for what companies must include in their plan depend on the type of vessel or facility, the location, and the amount and type of cargo involved. Washington oil handling facilities

near waterways that transfer oil to/from tank vessel or pipeline, cargo and passenger vessel 300 gross tons or more (non-tank vessels), and all tank vessels are to prepare contingency plans for oil spill response.

There are three major areas Ecology focuses on when preparing for an oil spill: planning standards, drill program, and primary response contractors.

Planning Standards

Planning standards are used to prepare for a worst case spill situation. The planning standards include requirements for oil spill assessment, boom, recovery, storage, in-situ burn, dispersants, shoreline cleanup, aerial observation, and workboats. When submitting a contingency plan a company must describe how they will meet the planning standards given their location, where they conduct oil transfers, and where they travel in Washington State.

Ecology will use the planning standards in the rule to determine if a company's contingency plan is adequate. The rule includes standards for facility and vessel transfer locations; high risk areas in the state, vessel transit locations, pipelines, and pipeline tank farms. Ecology has developed each of these standards to address the risk posed and to ensure that a minimum amount of equipment and personnel are available if a spill occurs.





Drill Program- Triennial Cycle

Spill drills are a way to test a company's oil contingency plan. Drills enable response personnel to become knowledgeable and proficient in the strengths and weaknesses of contingency plans, equipment, and procedures by testing them in different drill scenarios. Drills are an essential tool in determining contingency plan adequacy.

The drill requirements in the state rule are very similar to those found in the Federal program. Ecology evaluates all drills and provides the plan holder with feedback on areas where their contingency plan is inadequate. In addition Ecology shares lessons learned with all plan holders in the state and provides input to plan holders while they develop or update their plans.

Primary Response Contractors (PRC)

Primary Response Contractors (PRC) are contractors approved by the state who can respond to oil spills to assist in preventing the spread and clean-up of oil after a spill occurs. To meet the planning standards plan holders must use approved primary response contractors, or with company's owned equipment and personnel.

The contingency plan rule describes the requirements for submitting a PRC application and the 45-day-review process. PRC approval criteria includes, verification of equipment and personnel readiness, including ability to meet a one hour initial mobilization requirement, and compliance with all appropriate personnel safety and training requirements. The approval process allows the state to monitor the operational readiness of the state's response system and equipment.

For more information visit our website:
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html.

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Drill Cycle

A plan holder must schedule drills in advance and ensure Ecology has the opportunity to attend, participate, plan and evaluate the drills. A plan holder must hold the following drills during a triennial cycle:

- 3 table top drills (one per year)
 - 1 of which must be a worst case drill
- 6 deployment drills (two per year)
 - 2 of which must be a Geographic Response Plan (GRP) drills

During the triennial cycle Ecology may call unannounced drills on plan holders that may test any component of the contingency plan.

To become a state approved PRC you must:

- Submit an application;
- Have a process to provide 24 hour/day contact for spill response; and
- Commit to begin mobilization efforts immediately but no longer than 1-hour from notification of a spill.