

Vessel Notifications for Threat of Oil Spills

Report incidents and threats

- Activate your contingency plan.
- Call Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD):
1-800-258-5990

Contact

Sean Orr
360-280-6073

Spills Program website
ecology.wa.gov/SpillsProgram

Accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7211 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.

The consequences of an oil spill are greater today than ever before. Therefore when a vessel incident poses a substantial spill threat, it is best to make the required notifications. The faster notifications are made, the faster Ecology can coordinate with federal, state, and industry partners to ensure a rapid, aggressive, well-coordinated response.

Requirements for vessels 300 Gross Tons and larger to notify if there is a vessel incident

Washington State requires commercial vessels — those 300 gross tons or more — to notify the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) and activate their Washington State oil spill contingency plan as soon as an incident is under control. This state reporting requirement is separate from, and in addition to, the requirement to report to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

If contingency plan coverage is with the **National Response Corporation (NRC)** or the **Washington State Maritime Cooperative (WSMC)** or the **Maritime Fire and Safety Association (MFSA)**, operators **MUST** notify plan providers and EMD using the notification procedures in the plan and listed on a field document. The field document must be located on the bridge of the vessel prior to entering Washington State waters. It is the responsibility of the vessel to ensure notifications are properly made.

What is a reportable incident?

The owner or operator of a covered vessel must notify the state of any vessel incident that results in the discharging of oil, or when an incident occurs that poses a significant threat of a spill, even if short in duration. Ecology considers the following to be reportable vessel incidents:

- Total loss of propulsion, vessel adrift.
- Total loss of steering, vessel adrift or unable to maintain course.
- Vessel grounding, while transiting or at anchor.
- Partial propulsion loss, steering loss, electricity loss, or loss of navigational equipment that results in a vessel being unable to maintain its intended track clear of hazards or other vessels without assistance.
- Fire or flooding on the vessel.
- Collision with another vessel.
- Allision of an unusual/unplanned occurrence (other than normal docking activities).
- Vessel sinking or potential sinking.

- Vessel instability.
- Vessel structural damage or failure that could result in flooding or sinking.
- Explosion resulting in a major vessel structural damage or failure, or a breach of watertight envelope and/or tank containing oil.
- A broken tow wire between a towing vessel and a tank barge that results in a drifting barge.
- Emergency Response Towing Vessel (ERTV) deployment to assist a vessel.

In accordance with WAC 173-182-262(5):

The substantial threat of a discharge may be determined or affected by the following conditions: (a) ship location and proximity to land or other navigational hazards; (b) weather; (c) tidal currents; (d) sea state; (e) traffic density; (f) condition of vessel; and (g) timing or likelihood of vessel repairs.

If one of these types of incidents occurs, follow the notification procedures in the contingency plan, or field document, and **ensure it is reported within one hour to EMD at 1-800-258-5990.**

How can a qualified individual, agent, or contingency plan holder assist the vessel?

- Report to EMD for you if they are identified as an authorized representative.
- Explain required notifications identified in the plan and field document.
- Help owners/operators understand the criteria for reporting a vessel incident to EMD.

What happens when you notify?

A spill team, the USCG, and Ecology take the report and determine appropriate actions for the type of incident reported. Once reported to the contingency plan holder, Ecology considers the contingency plan activated and ready to be implemented. An initial incident commander may be assigned to coordinate with Ecology and the USCG. This does not mean resources are deployed.

Most reports are non-spill incidents simply monitored by Ecology's incident management staff in coordination with the USCG, the contingency plan holder, or the vessel owner for status reports. If the situation evolves, higher-level response actions may be initiated.

Reporting requirements and the location of the vessel incident

- It is mandatory to report a vessel incident that occurs within Washington State waters — Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound, Columbia River, and up to three miles off the coast.
- Incidents occurring outside of Washington State waters, three-plus miles offshore or off the coast, require notification if the situational conditions could result in impacts to state waters and resources.

Things to know when considering the need to report a threat of a spill

- If a vessel experiences an incident that fits within the criteria, it needs to be reported.
- By making early notification, Ecology, response partners, and other partners are better prepared if a spill occurs.
- In the majority of incidents, notification initiates coordination with the USCG and continued monitoring until the incident is resolved.
- Reporting helps vessel companies maintain good standing and demonstrates a commitment to proactively preventing spills or situations that could lead to a spill. Not reporting could lead to more serious consequences and higher penalties if a spill does occur.

Report vessel incidents and help Ecology and response partners be ready to launch a rapid, aggressive, well-coordinated response.