



Alaska Department  
of Environmental Conservation

# Prevention and Emergency Response Program



**Prevention and Emergency Response Program**

## Mission

---

Protect public safety, public health and the environment by preventing and mitigating the effects of oil and hazardous substance releases and ensuring their cleanup through government planning and rapid response.

The handling of oil and hazardous substances can pose a significant threat to Alaska's economy and environment. The state's social and economic history has changed with oil development, and expanding chemical use after the discovery and development of the Kenai and Cook Inlet oil and gas fields in the 1950's and '60's, and Prudhoe Bay in the 60's and 70's.

Alaskans have long recognized the need to protect our natural resources. Prudent management of oil and hazardous substances and the enactment of environmental laws are essential to ensure protection. State and Federal laws prohibit the discharge of oil or hazardous substances, require prompt reporting when a spill does occur, and mandate containment, control, removal, and proper disposal of all waste materials. Under these laws the spiller is responsible for cleanup.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is tasked with carrying out these laws. Three programs within DEC's Division of Spill Prevention and Response are responsible for ensuring facilities prevent spills and take proper response actions when spills occur:

- The Prevention and Emergency Response Program (PERP) responds to spills to ensure cleanup measures are implemented as soon as possible, and institutes a statewide spill prevention program.
- The Industry Preparedness and Pipeline Program requires regulated facilities and vessels to develop state approved contingency plans to ensure personnel, equipment and financial resources are available to respond to spills and to establish a facility wide spill prevention program. Drills are conducted to exercise the plan holder's spill response resources and to evaluate their readiness.
- The Contaminated Sites Program ensures responsible parties clean up sites contaminated by past improper disposal of oil and hazardous substances and manages the underground storage tank program.



Cleanups take place in different environments.

Alaska statute mandates DEC to seek cost recovery and full reimbursement from the spiller. In case the spiller is unidentified or uncooperative, the Legislature established the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund to provide a source of funding to ensure spills are cleaned up. These funds are available to pay for State and local government cleanup costs.

## DEC Spill Response Objectives

---

To meet its statutory responsibilities, DEC has implemented the following Response Objectives:

**SAFETY**—Ensure the safety of all persons involved in a response or exposed to the immediate effects of the incident.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**—Ensure the protection of public health from the direct or indirect effects of contaminated drinking water, air or food.

**ENVIRONMENT**—Ensure the protection of the environment, including natural and cultural resources, from the direct or indirect effects of contamination.

**CLEANUP**—Ensure adequate containment, control, cleanup and disposal by the responsible party, or take over the response when cleanup is judged inadequate.

**RESTORATION**—Ensure the assessment of damages from contamination and the restoration of property, natural resources and the environment.

**COST RECOVERY**—Ensure the recovery of costs and penalties for reimbursement to the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund for use in future emergency response actions.

## Response

“Response” includes all of the actions taken by the Department to ensure the DEC response objectives are met. Within the State of Alaska, the spill response community generally recognizes three types of responses. These are as follows:

**Responsible Party-Led Response:** The responsible party (RP) assumes responsibility and actively engages in response and cleanup activities. The Federal and State entities assume an oversight role to monitor the adequacy of the RP’s efforts, perform required regulatory functions and jointly develop response objectives with the RP.



*Shoreline Cleanup*

**Responsible Party Augmented Response:**

In certain circumstances the RP may require additional assistance from the Federal and State governments to launch an adequate response and sustain a cleanup operation. The Federal or State agencies may augment the RP’s efforts as necessary including staffing of the incident response organization and providing additional spill response resources.

**Government-Led Response:** In the event of a non-responsive, incapable or unknown RP, the Federal or State agency with jurisdiction will take the lead and manage the response and cleanup operation.

During a spill response, DEC’s PERP staff carry out a variety of key tasks, depending on the size and nature of the incident. Because of the large number of reported spills, the Department performs field inspections to only those spills which may have a significant impact on public health or the environment. For smaller spills, PERP staff may work over the phone with the responsible party to ensure cleanup.

Some of the key tasks during a response are:

- Ensuring the safety of those involved
- Protecting public health
- Identifying the spiller or “responsible party”
- Evaluating the adequacy of the cleanup
- Investigating the cause
- Determining the volume spilled and recovered
- Tracking the movement of the spill
- Measuring and documenting the extent of contamination
- Ensuring the containment, cleanup, removal and disposal of spilled materials
- Coordinating with all local, state and federal interests using the Incident Command System (ICS)
- Providing logistical support for field operations
- Assessing damage to natural resources
- Ensuring restoration of the environment



*Spills may come from a variety of sources.*

DEC uses its internet website (<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/dspar/perp>) to make spill response information more readily available to the interested public. Information available on the website includes: current and significant spills, after action reports, current events concerning the response community, response plans, drill schedules, research and development projects and other special features.

## Area Response Teams

The State is divided into three Response Centers with Area Response Teams based in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. Each Area Response Team has a pre-designated State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC), who is authorized to immediately spend up to \$25,000 for emergency actions. The SOSCs may also seek approval to expend greater amounts as necessary to manage an incident. Staff comprising the Area Response Teams have expertise and resources to combat a spill and will work in coordination with the responsible party and other state, local, and federal officials.

## Alaska Spill Response Depot/Corps System

Recognizing the importance of local involvement, DEC has developed partnerships with local communities to expand Alaska's oil and hazardous substance spill response capabilities and readiness. DEC has negotiated over 35 spill response agreements with boroughs and communities across the State. These response agreements ensure DEC and local residents will be better prepared to protect human health and the environment from the risks associated with oil and hazardous substance spills. The agreements allow DEC to request local assistance based on the needs of a particular incident. DEC works with communities that have signed agreements to improve preparedness and identify ways in which local capability may be enhanced through training and additional response equipment. If the local government can assist in responding to local oil and hazardous substance releases, the Department uses a community spill response agreement to allow for reimbursement of expenses as well as local training.



### Pre-positioned Response Equipment

To assist local communities in preparation for emergency spill response, DEC has pre-positioned equipment depots throughout Alaska. The depots are under the command and control of the DEC State On-Scene Coordinator, but are available at cost to responsible parties, local communities, spill response cooperatives and response action contractors. The packages normally consist of 8' x 20' metal "Conex" containers which are placed in readily accessible locations such as airports and harbor facilities where they can also be secured and maintained. The depots are capable of being airlifted or their contents can be repackaged for transport by small aircraft or other means. The equipment depots supply local communities with a basic "first aid" capability, allowing timely response to an incident without having to wait for outside resources to arrive. The depots are designed to include equipment suited to the types of spills that may occur in the local area.



*Iliamna Response Container*



*High-speed Response Vessel*

Nearshore response equipment consisting of vessels, skimmers and barges has been located in coastal communities for response to spills on water. Local responders can use this pre-positioned equipment for an on water recovery to assist a RP's response efforts or to mount an immediate response when no RP is identified. Equipment or vessels are located in Ketchikan, Juneau, Haines, Cook Inlet, Bristol Bay, Unalaska and Kodiak.

### Response Corps Training

As part of these response corps agreements, DEC provides training to local residents. Included in the training are use of State supplied equipment for first response and various personnel protection techniques. This training enables these communities to initiate a safe, rapid response to an oil or hazardous substance spill without waiting for the arrival of State responders.

### Statewide Hazardous Material Response

The Regional Hazmat Team is composed of several teams capable of deploying to any location in the State to respond to a Hazmat release. The Team is "Level A" capable (i.e., the highest level of capability for response). The Teams are based in Anchorage and Fairbanks, and are available for callout through the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. The Teams are available for emergency response only, and not for cleanup and recovery operations. Once the emergency phase is terminated, the teams will be returned to their location of origin.

## Prevention

In an ideal situation, all oil and hazardous substance spills would be prevented; however, this is not the case. Spill prevention is achieved by eliminating human and mechanical failure to the greatest extent possible, using the best technology and practices, and having back-up safety systems in place. DEC's PERP staff work with industry and the public to identify and implement ways to prevent spills.

### Spills Database

PERP maintains a comprehensive spill database and produces quarterly and annual spill summaries detailing source, cause, type, amount and other information for all reported spills. Timely and accurate spill information allows staff to document the frequency and causes of spills. Staff reviews these records to target specific areas for spill prevention initiatives.

### Home Heating Oil Initiative

One frequently occurring spill type identified from the spills database is home heating oil tank spills. The Department has undertaken a public awareness program to educate homeowners in installation of new tanks, inspection and precautions to take for existing tanks, recommendations for home buyers and sellers and what to do when a release from a tank is noticed. This Information may also be found on our web site. (<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/dspar/stp/heat.htm>).



*Examples of Poor Home Heating Oil Support Structures.*

### Research and Development

Research in the fields of cleanup technology, non-mechanical response options, fate and effects of spilled oil, contingency planning and preparedness, training, spill management systems and spill prevention has been conducted in cooperation with citizens' groups, industry oil-spill response cooperatives, other State and federal agencies, and academic institutions. The results from these projects are available on the Department's web page (<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/dspar/perp>)

## Preparedness

DEC receives over 2,000 reports of oil and hazardous substance releases each year. A field visit or follow-up assistance is required for roughly 40% of all reported spills. PERP staff may initiate and sustain ongoing response activities for 50-100 significant incidents in any given year.



*Valdez Emergency Operations Center During a Large Drill.*

### Callout

The majority of spill reports are made during normal working hours to the nearest DEC area response team. DEC has a Callout System for receiving spill reports, mobilizing and responding to a significant spill at anytime and any location in the state. With the assistance of the state troopers, DEC maintains an in-state toll-free 24-hour spill reporting number.

### Training and Drills

DEC response teams are trained to assess the hazard and determine what actions should be taken for either oil or hazardous substance spills. A safety and training program identifies the minimum baseline level of training needed for responders. Industry and government-led drills and exercises are a critical component of response readiness. DEC staff regularly undertakes after-action review of spill responses and drills to identify areas for further improvement.



*DEC Mobile Command Van*

### State Response Resources

DEC maintains an inventory of specialized equipment to carry out its mission. The majority of this equipment is located at the DEC warehouse in Anchorage, with smaller warehouse locations in Valdez, Juneau and Fairbanks. A mobile 24-foot communications and command trailer, and a 14-foot equipment trailer are located in Anchorage and can be deployed anywhere on the State's road system. Equipment standards, procurement, inventory, and management are the responsibility of a statewide DEC PERP logistics team. In addition, PERP maintains term contracts with private oil-spill response organizations, which can be activated in an emergency to provide additional resources. Activation of local response resources through community spill response agreements, ramp-up of personnel from other programs and State agencies, and emergency hires are some of the other ways in which PERP augments its capability to respond to larger incidents. DEC also maintains cooperative response agreements with other federal and State agencies, including

the U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency and Minerals Management Service and the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs.

### Response Planning

The Alaska Federal-State Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil and Hazardous Substance Discharges/Releases (Unified Plan) provides the blueprint for government response to oil and hazardous substance spills. DEC has also published the Unified Plan's ten Subarea Contingency Plans, each of which covers a different geographic region of the State. The Unified and Subarea plans are used to coordinate an effective response to spills. Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) also provide specific response tactics for protecting environmentally sensitive areas. The Department has also developed Type 1 Plans for the State's response to catastrophic oil spills and hazardous material releases. Type 1 Plans identify the personnel, equipment and resources the State will activate when responding to a catastrophic oil spill or hazardous substance release.

### Emergency Response Communications

The ability to communicate is essential for a successful response to an oil or hazardous substance release. Besides today's normal means of communications, DEC relies on various methods that include UHF and VHF radios, microwave repeaters, and satellite systems. All have different roles to play in emergency response operations.

"Spillnet", DEC's backbone fixed-repeater system, originally consisted of a series of fixed VHF two-way radio repeaters in Prince William Sound, but has since grown to include repeaters in other areas of high risk for significant spills, including Cook Inlet, Southeast Alaska and the North Slope. The repeaters are linked to provide continuous radio coverage from Cook Inlet to Prince William Sound and Kodiak. For responses in areas that are not in the Spillnet "footprint", each area response team is equipped with a portable repeater system. Using hand-held VHF radios, responders can establish a stand-alone system for local response communications and if communications in remote areas are not possible due to terrain or some other reason, the Department has a number of satellite systems that may be used.



*Fixed VHF radio repeater.*

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation  
Division of Spill Prevention and Response

**REPORT ALL**

**OIL AND HAZARDOUS  
SUBSTANCE SPILLS**

**During normal business hours  
contact the nearest DEC Area Response Team office:**

**Central Alaska Response Team**

**Anchorage**

**269-3063**

**FAX: 269-7648**

**Northern Alaska Response Team**

**Fairbanks**

**451-2121**

**FAX: 451-2362**

**Southeast Alaska Response Team**

**Juneau**

**465-5340**

**FAX: 465-2237**

**Outside normal business hours, call 1-800-478-9300**

**ALASKA LAW REQUIRES REPORTING OF ALL SPILLS**

The State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This publication is available in alternative communication formats upon request. Please contact the Department at 465-5220 to make any necessary arrangements.

**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation**

Division of Spill Prevention and Response  
Prevention and Emergency Response Program  
410 Willoughby Ave.  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1795



(907) 465-5220