

INTERIOR ALASKA SUBAREA CONTINGENCY PLAN

GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES (GRS)

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GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES: PART ONE – INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

These Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) are designed to be a supplement to the Interior Alaska Subarea Contingency Plan for Oil and Hazardous Substances Spills and Releases, commonly referred to as the Southeast Alaska Subarea Contingency Plan (SCP). GRS provide unified (public, responders, and agencies) priorities and strategies for the protection of selected sensitive areas to aid first responders to an oil spill. The GRS list the sensitive resources of an area and the response strategies, equipment, personnel and logistical information necessary to protect the sensitive areas. Because the Environmental Protection Agency and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation have already approved them, the GRS serve as pre-approved strategies of the Unified Command during the emergency phase of an oil spill response.

Implementation of these Geographic Response Strategies is the third phase of an oil spill response. The first and primary phase of the response is to contain and remove the oil at the scene of the spill or while it is still on the open water, thereby reducing or eliminating impact on shorelines or sensitive habitats. If some of the spilled oil escapes this tactic, the second phase, which is no less important, is to intercept, contain and remove the oil in the nearshore area. The intent of phase two is the same as phase one: remove the spilled oil before it impacts sensitive environments. If phases one and two are not fully successful, phase three is to protect sensitive areas in the path of the oil. The purpose of phase three is to protect the selected sensitive areas from the impacts of a spill or to minimize that impact to the maximum extent practical.

The sites selected for development of Geographic Response Strategies are not meant to be exclusive; other sensitive sites may require protection during any given spill. The fact that a GRS may not have been developed for a certain sensitive site does not mean that site should not be protected if it is threatened by an oil spill.

These strategies are intended to be flexible to allow the spill responders to modify them, as necessary, to fit the prevailing conditions at the time of a spill. Seasonal constraints, such as ice or weather, may preclude implementation of some of the strategies in the winter months. It is not intended that all the sites be automatically protected at the beginning of a spill, only those that are in the projected path of the spill. The strategies developed for the selected sites were completed with a focus on minimizing environmental damage, utilizing as small a footprint as needed to support the response operations and selecting sites for equipment deployment that will not cause more damage than the spilled oil. To test these GRS, each site may be visited and equipment deployed according to the strategy, to ensure that the strategy is the most effective in protecting the resources at risk at the site. Revisions will be made to the strategies, and this document, if changes are indicated by site visits, drills or actual use during spills. The Southeast Alaska Subarea has been divided into nine geographic response zones (Figure G-1-1). The zones boundaries were chosen to reflect the geography and population centers in Southeast Alaska.

B. HOW TO USE THESE GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES

The information provided here supplements information provided in the Interior SCP and the Alaska Federal/State Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil & Hazardous Substances Discharge/Releases (commonly referred to as the Unified Plan). Information provided in either of those plans is not

duplicated herein. This document is intended for use by response professionals already familiar with spill response techniques.

C. WHO TO CONTACT FOR INPUT

Comments and recommendations on these GRS are welcomed. Please send your comments to either of the following agencies:

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Prevention and Emergency Response Program
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99501

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region X Alaska Operations Office
227 W 7th Ave, #19,
Anchorage, AK 99513

D. HOW THE DOCUMENT WAS DEVELOPED

The EPA and ADEC have only recently begun the development of inland GRS's. At present, the only location is along the Chena River in Fairbanks. The development of additional GRS's is planned with particularly along rivers downstream of Alaska Railroad and/or Trans Alaska Pipeline Crossings. Both the railroad and Alyeska have developed a number of spill strategies for spill along their corridors; however, most of these are for the spill area and a short distance downstream.

These GRS were developed through a cooperative, work group process involving federal, state, and local spill response experts working with representatives from the oil production and transportation industry, citizens' groups, and natural resource agencies. The Interior GRS Work Group developed the GRS for the Chena River area, Fairbanks region.

Work Group participants identified sensitive areas with potential to be classified as "Areas of Major Concern" under the criteria established in the Interior Subarea Plan. These potential sites were evaluated by the additional criteria of 1) risk of being impacted from a water borne spill; and 2) feasibility of successfully protecting the site with existing technology. Using this process, the work group selected a preliminary list of sites that was released for public input. Feedback on site selection was solicited from tribal representatives, user groups, environmental organizations and the general public. Based on the feedback received, the work group made the final site selections for the zone. Additional sites may be selected in the future.

An Interior Tactics committee, composed of spill response professionals, was formed to develop draft strategies for each site selected. The draft strategies were reviewed and approved by the entire Work Group and the final draft was forwarded to the Interior Subarea Committee with the recommendation that it be adopted as part of the Interior SCP.

1. INTERIOR GRS WORKGROUP

The Interior GRS Work Group developed GRS's for the Fairbanks region of the Chena River. The work group consisted of representatives from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES: PART TWO – GENERAL PROTECTION/RECOVERY TACTICS

The Chena River GRS was developed as part of larger document, the *Chena River Vulnerability Assessment and Geographic Response Strategies*.

The GRS General Protection/Recovery Tactics are available on the ADEC Website at <http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/perp/grs/int/home.htm>.

GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES: PART THREE – SITE SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC RESPONSE STRATEGIES

The GRS Site Specific Response Strategies Introductory
Text and Index Maps are available on the ADEC
Website at

<http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/perp/grs/int/home.htm>.