



Alaska Area Committees

Frequently Asked Questions

Area Committee FAQ

This document answers frequently asked questions regarding Alaska Area Committees. In summary, Area Committees are meetings between all levels of government, industry, and stakeholders that work together to manage Area Contingency Plans (ACP), which documents oil and hazardous substance response planning at the local level.

What is an Area Committee?

The Clean Water Act, as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) mandate that an Area Committee exist within each Coast Guard Captain of the Zone. The Area Committee must:

1. Prepare for its area the Area Contingency Plan (ACP);
2. Work with state and local officials to enhance the contingency planning of those officials and to assure preplanning of joint response efforts, including appropriate procedures for mechanical recovery, dispersal, shoreline cleanup, protection of sensitive environmental areas, and protection, rescue and rehabilitation of fisheries and wildlife; and
3. Work with state and local officials to expedite decisions for the use of dispersants and other mitigating substances and devices.

Additional Area Committee activities include, but are not limited to:

- ACP modification, distribution and evaluation
- Education and outreach
- Net Environmental Benefits Analysis coordination
- ACP based drills, exercises and training

What is the National Response System (NRS) and how does the Area Committee work within the NRS?

The Area Committee is part of a larger system known as the National Response System (NRS). The NRS is comprised of federal, state and local responders, and private sector partners. The NRS provides a framework for coordination to respond effectively and efficiently to oil discharges, radiological substance releases, and releases of hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants.

Specific components of the NRS are the Federal On-Scene Coordinators (FOSCs), State On-Scene Coordinators (SOSCs), Area Committees (ACs), Regional Response Teams (RRTs), State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs), Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), and the National Response Center (NRC). These components are responsible for leading contingency planning efforts that ultimately guide response activities.

What is an Area Contingency Plan (ACP)?

Also required by the Clean Water Act, as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), ACPs represent government oil and hazardous substance response planning at the local level. ACPs contain specific oil and hazardous substance spill response, incident management, and all-hazards preparedness elements and provide effective implementation of response actions.

Additionally, ACPs describe the strategy for the FOSSC and SOSOC to achieve a unified and coordinated response with Federal, State, local, Tribal, responsible party (RP) and other stakeholders. The responsibility of overseeing the development of ACPs falls to the FOSSCs and SOSOCs. In turn, they work together via the Area Committee to

maintain, update, test and distribute the ACP. EPA is the predesignated FOSC for inland areas and the USCG for coastal areas. ADEC is the predesignated SOSC for all areas of the state.

How is this different from other emergency planning and preparedness activities?

The Area Committee and the ACP focus on planning, preparedness and response activities associated with oil discharges and hazardous substances releases. The NCP via the National Response System (NRS) ensures a system of preparedness and response that connects at various levels to traditional natural disaster emergency response managed by federal, state and local emergency management agencies.

Who may attend Area Committee meetings?

Everyone is welcome to attend Area Committee meetings. This is the public's ability to provide real-time feedback to the Area. Area Committee information and generated work product shall be documented and made available to the public.

Who may serve on an Area Committee?

Individuals participate within the Area Committee in one of three ways:

- **Members:** These are federal, tribal, state and local government employees appointed in writing by the Federal On-Scene Coordinator and the State On-Scene Coordinators and represent the interests of the government agencies that employ them.
- **Members-at-Large:** These individuals are representatives from industry, environmental stakeholders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and oil spill removal organizations (OSROs). These members are limited in the positions they may serve within the Area Committee organizational structure.
- **Observers:** These individuals make up a broad spectrum of interests not already represented above. They are members of the public and individuals that have a specific interest relevant to any given Area Committee topic. They cannot serve on any Area Committee subcommittees but may provide input or comments relevant to a specific Area Committee issue.

What specific geographic areas of Alaska do the proposed Alaska Area Committees cover?

There are four areas covered by Alaska Area Committees: the Arctic and Western Alaska Area, Prince William Sound Area, and the Southeast Alaska Area. These areas mimic the Coast Guard Captain of the Port zones and extend seawards 200 nautical miles to the Economic Exclusion Zone. These areas extend inland 1,000 yards. The Inland Area extends from the coastal areas beginning 1,000 yards inland. Follow this link for Western Alaska COTP zone coordinates:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/07-3189/p-107>

Where can you obtain more information about Area Committees?

To obtain information about the Alaska Area Committees, please visit:

<http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/contingency-plans/response-plans/regional-area-planning/>

