



REGIONAL AND AREA PLANNING

Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding the transition from The Unified Plan and ten Subarea Plans, to an Alaska Regional Plan and four Area Plans

What Planning Structure does Alaska Currently Have?

The Unified Plan: The State of Alaska, United States Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), jointly manage *The Unified Plan (UP)*, *The Alaska Federal/State Preparedness Plan for Response to Oil and Hazardous Substance Discharges/Releases*, promulgated in 1994. At the time, *The Unified Plan* met all state and federal requirements for preparing for and responding to oil discharges and hazardous substance releases.

Subarea Plans: There are ten geographic subarea contingency plans – individually updated every five years.

One Plan – Two Volumes: For any given point on the map of Alaska, there is one government spill response plan that consists of two volumes. *The Unified Plan*, which contains statewide guidance, policies, and response procedures and the second volume, containing the applicable subarea contingency plan.

Why Change?

The planning system described above met the regulatory requirements, as they existed in 1994. Over the past 20 years, however, federal agencies issued policy directives and regulatory guidance to Coast Guard Sectors and EPA Regions, to implement policy changes and lessons learned following large-scale responses. Until now, Alaska has not implemented these changes. Doing so will require a major overhaul of the planning framework.

It is challenging to keep the existing plans current while ensuring appropriate input from stakeholders, natural resource trustees, and tribal governments. Updates have taken longer than expected, and results in cascading delays as it is often the same agency representatives working to update the plans across the state.

In the fall of 2015, the State of Alaska, Coast Guard, and EPA began work to evaluate the existing system, compare it to that of the rest of the nation's, and explore the possibilities of adopting the planning format and policies of the rest of the United States.

The first task was to determine how Alaska’s system differs from that of the prevailing lower 48 system. (See Figure 1)

Alaska Plans vs. Lower 48 Plans

	Alaska	Lower 48
Planning Structure	Unified Plan and Subarea Contingency Plans	Regional Contingency Plans and Area Contingency Plans
Plan Format	From Oil Pollution Act 1990	Incident Command System
Regional Planning Responsibility	Regional Response Team	Regional Response Team
Area Planning Responsibility	Regional Response Team / State and Federal On-Scene Coordinators	State and Federal On-Scene Coordinators
Planning Committees	Temporary Subarea Committees (as needed)	Standing Area Committees
Update Cycle	3 plans per year + Unified Plan	~ 1 plan per year
Familiarity to incoming planners	Not the same... Alaska is different	Similar to other Regional and Area Contingency Plans

Figure 1

The current planning system is unique to Alaska. Other states use the standard format described in the National Contingency Plan. In an effort to increase the effectiveness of all available resources during a major discharge or release, the State, Coast Guard and EPA emergency managers believe that a common structure and management process is essential in a smooth inclusion of emergency responders from around the country.

Proposed Planning Framework

The intent is to build a planning framework in the State of Alaska that is consistent with the [National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan](#) (National Contingency Plan).

Alaska Regional Plan: As required by 40 CFR 300.210, the Alaska Regional Contingency Plan must follow the format of the National Contingency Plan, contain lines of demarcation between Coast Guard and EPA jurisdictions, and must contain any agreement preauthorizing the use of chemical dispersants.

As required by Alaska Statute 46.04.200, the Statewide Master Plan (referred to in this document as the Alaska Regional Contingency Plan) must take into consideration the elements of an oil discharge prevention and contingency plan, include incident command systems that clarify and specify the respective responsibilities, and identify actions necessary to reduce the likelihood of discharges of oil or releases of hazardous substances. The State is further required to conduct a public review of the draft plan.

Area Contingency Plans: Also required under 40 CFR 300.210, Area Contingency Plans must describe the area covered by the plan, the responsibilities of the responders (both government

and the responsible party), list area response resources, outline dispersant procedures, include a description of integration with other plans, and identify sensitive areas.

As required by Alaska Statute 46.04.210, Regional Master Plans (referred to in this document as Area Plans), must identify the area covered by the plan and a public review of the draft plan conducted.

Relationship of Plans

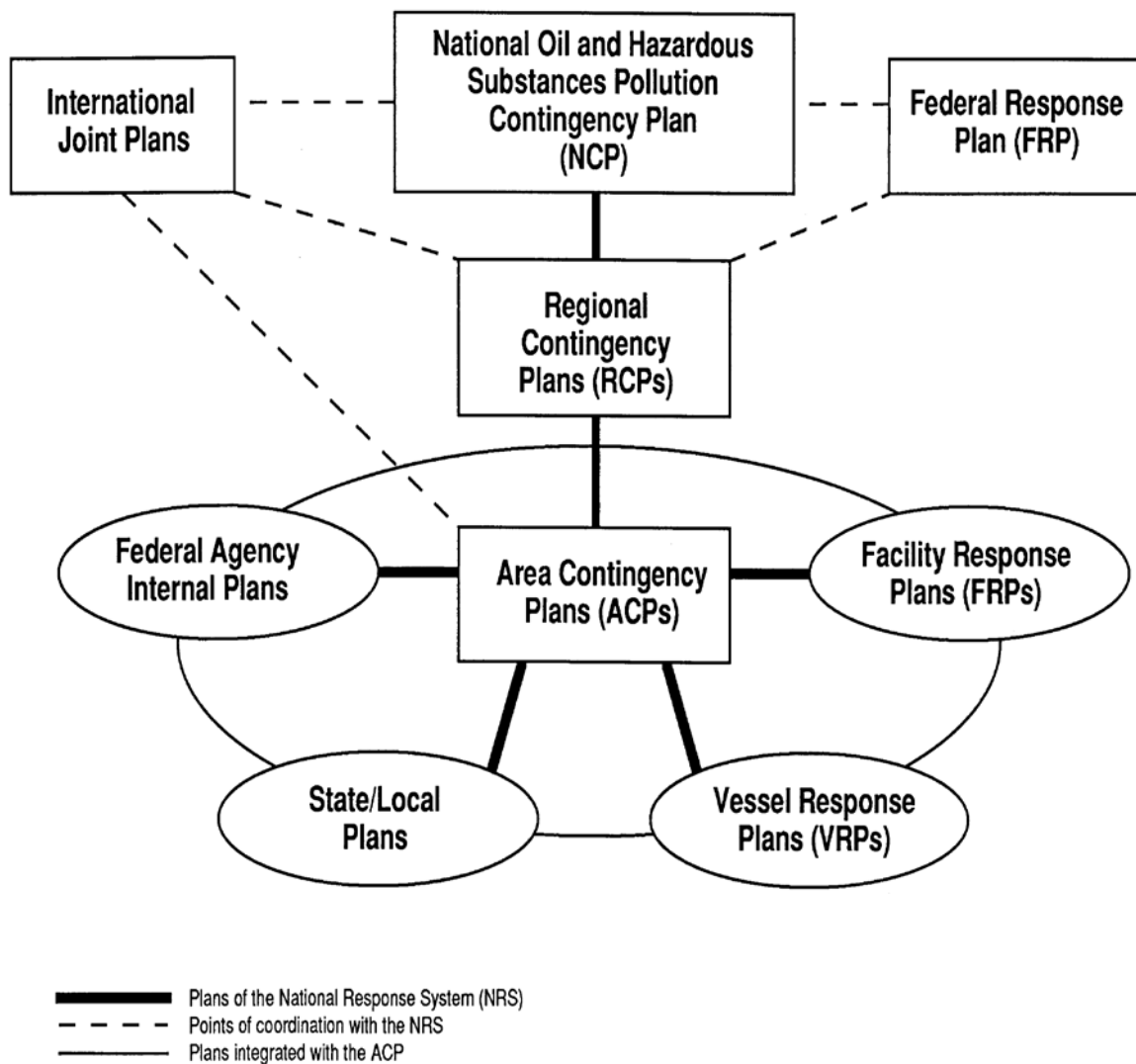


Figure 2

*Courtesy NCP
40 CFR 300.205*

Required by the Clean Water Act, as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and the National Contingency Plan, Area Contingency Plans represent government, industry, and stakeholder oil and hazardous substance response planning at the local level. Area Contingency Plans 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 FOOSC 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 Area Contingency Plans falls to the Federal On-Scene Coordinators and State On-Scene Coordinators.

Proposed Boundaries: There are four areas covered by Alaska Area Committees – three coastal and one inland. The coastal areas are 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, and also extend inland 1,000 yards. The Inland Area extends from the coastal areas, beginning 1,000 yards inland.

Proposed Boundaries Map



Figure 3

Area Committees: The National Contingency Plan mandates that Area Committees exist within each Area. Area Committees are made up of representatives from all levels of government, industry, and stakeholders working together to manage Area Contingency Plans. The responsibility of overseeing the development of Area Contingency Plans falls to the respective Area’s Federal On-Scene Coordinator and State On-Scene Coordinator(s). EPA is the predesignated FOSC for the inland area and the Coast Guard for coastal areas. ADEC is the predesignated SOSOC for all areas of the state.

For more information regarding Area Committees, see the [Area Committee Frequently Asked Questions document](#).

Proposed, NCP Compliant Planning Framework

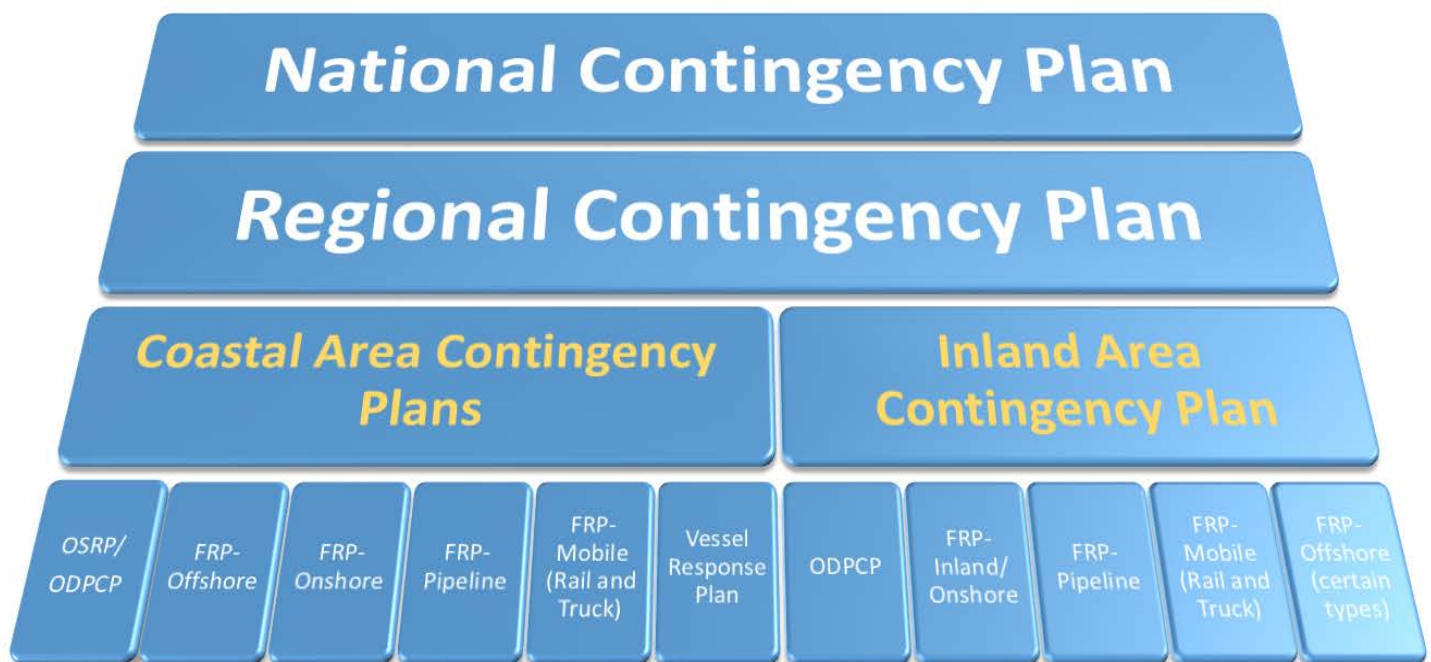


Figure 4