

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EQUIPMENT CAPABILITY IN THE INLAND ZONE – A US COAST GUARD PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act resulted in numerous US Coast Guard, US Environmental Protection Agency, and US DOT Research and Special Programs Administration Office of Pipeline Safety regulations establishing minimum planning criteria for the availability of equipment and other resources to respond to oil spills involving tank vessels and facilities that handle, store, transfer, or transport oil in the inland areas of the US. These requirements were established based on the risk of or potential impact from an oil discharge to the navigable waters of the United States, and the availability of private sector response resources to respond to such discharges. The regulations establish minimum criteria for response planning that apply nationwide. These criteria include “tiered” response times with specific minimum quantities of equipment and other resources for each tier to account for the realities of cascading resources from a wide area to respond to a significant oil discharge.

The US Coast Guard relies primarily on their Response Resource Inventory (RRI) database and voluntary Oil Spill Removal Organization (OSRO) Classification Program to assess the private sector capability available to respond to such incidents. This presentation will discuss the Coast Guard’s experience implementing the tank vessel and facility response plan regulations in 33 CFR Parts 154 and 155, the locations of private sector resources available to respond to incidents in the “inland zone,” and whether there are shortfalls (actual or perceived) in those resources. Planned improvements to the US Coast Guard’s OSRO Classification Program will also be discussed.

This presentation will also include a brief discussion of work being performed by the Coast Guard to assess the state of technology for containing and recovering oil in fast currents, information that directly applies to spill response in the inland zone.