

Environmental Unit Job Aid

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1000 Environmental Unit

Other than protecting human life and safety, reducing impacts on natural, cultural, and economic resources is the key motive in responding to an oil or hazardous substance spill or release. The EU is the central point within the Planning Section for determining how to best protect those resources.

1100 Environmental Unit Responsibilities

The EU is responsible for:

- Identifying all natural resources, economic resources, and cultural/historic properties likely to be affected by the spill or release and recommending priorities to protect these resources (see Resources at Risk Response Tools for an operational checklist for completing ICS form 232 – Resources at Risk);
- Providing guidance for the implementation of protection strategies contained within Geographic Response Plans (GRPs);
- Working with the Operations Section to establish any additional environmental protection strategies not identified in GRPs;
- Working with the Operations Section to coordinate wildlife rescue/rehabilitation activities;
- Developing a Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team (SCAT) Plan (see SCAT Tools);
 - Establishing and managing the SCAT
 - Using SCAT information to recommend shoreline cleanup recommendations, priorities, and restrictions
- Providing guidance regarding “how clean is clean” decisions;
- Providing technical review and recommendations regarding the use of alternative technologies;
- Developing a disposal plan (note: Washington State Disposal Guidelines are provided in Disposal and Waste Management Guidance tool)
- Providing information to the Joint Information Center and Incident Commander/Unified Command regarding natural resource concerns/impacts;
- Coordinating with Natural Resource Damage Assessment activities;
- Coordinating with the Wildlife Branch and Air Operations Branch on issues involving wildlife hazing.

1200 Environmental Unit Leader Staffing Policy

The NWACs and Region 10 Regional Response Team (RRT10) recognize that there is a shared responsibility to manage a response among the UC representatives. Moreover, it is broadly recognized that the critical phase of any response, regardless of size, occurs during the initial hours after the spill or release. Given the importance of the EU's duties, and because the responsibility and knowledge base for public resources lies with trustee agencies, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure that early critical response decisions are made by the most knowledgeable individuals quickly, efficiently, and effectively. Therefore, it is the policy of the NWACs that the EU be led by a representative of a government natural resource trustee or environmental agency, if available. If no such agency representative is initially available or willing to lead the EU, an RP representative may fill that role. Furthermore, as the response action matures, a transition to an RP-designated EUL may occur with the concurrence of the UC. The RRT and NWACs also encourage spill response plan holders and RPs to designate a Deputy EUL, who will participate in all the meetings attended and briefings made by the EUL. These meetings and briefings include, but are not limited to, the following pre-identified ICS scheduled events:

- Initial ICS 201 briefing,
- Command and general staff meetings,
- Tactics meetings,
- Planning meetings,
- Operations meetings,
- UC briefings, and
- Press conferences.

As the response matures, RRT10 and NWACs agree that the Trustee EUL will co-lead the EU with an RP. The Co-Leader situation will continue until such time that the Trustee representative in the EU and the UC agree to an RP lead only. For moderate to large incidents, the Co-Leaders will primarily attend meetings together, so it may be important to designate an Assistant EUL. The Assistant EUL's job is to stay in the EU to ensure that assignments made by the Co-Leaders are carried out and complete other duties as assigned by the Co-Leaders.

1300 Environmental Unit Staffing

All trustee resource agency staff with environmental information/expertise should initially report to the EU. This includes technical specialists (e.g., Scientific Support Coordinator [SSC]) identified elsewhere within the ICS organization. However, it is recognized that the SSC is an independent advisor to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC). Technical specialists might include:

- Sampling Specialist,
- Response Technology Specialist,
- Trajectory Analysis Specialist,

- Weather Forecast Specialist,
- Resources at Risk Specialist,
- Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Specialist,
- Historical/Cultural Resources Specialist, and
- Disposal Specialist.

1400 Special Emphasis: Resources at Risk

The Resources at Risk (RAR) Summary provides information about locations in the incident area that are sensitive due to environmental, archaeo-cultural, or socioeconomic RARs. Typically, the ICS 232 – Resources at Risk form is completed within the EU. The ICS 232 form identifies and prioritizes incident-specific priorities and issues. The EUL, with input from resource trustees, will complete this form for each operational period. See Resources at Risk Response Tools for guidance on completing an ICS 232 form.

Sources and types of information for the ICS 232 form may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) Maps,
- Environmental Response Management Application Northwest,
- Washington State Coastal Atlas,
- Oregon Incident Response Information System,
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitat and Species,
- Geographic Response Plans,
- Watersheds and Aquifers,
- Threatened and Endangered Species,
- Nautical Charts, other maps, and
- Tribal Reservation Lands and Usual and Accustomed (U&A) areas.

The GRPs contain pre-identified strategies or tactics to address the protection or mitigation of risk for some—but not all—RARs. Strategies may need to be developed for an incident specific resource at risk. It is possible that a resource may not be able to be protected from potential impacts; however, it is important to know what resources may be at risk within the incident area. The EU may provide guidance to the Operations Section on how to best implement protection strategies, including considerations of Endangered Species Act (ESA) and cultural resources.