

## What is the guiding framework for oil and hazmat spill response?

The National Response System (NRS) is the federal regulatory mechanism used to manage all hazardous materials incidents, including oil spills. Coordination between federal, state, local and tribal interests is mandated. The National Contingency Plan (NCP) is the regulation governing the NRS. The NCP requires spillers to self-notify when spills occur and ensures they are financially responsible for the response. The NCP also empowers On Scene Coordinators (OSCs) to oversee cleanups. EPA provides OSCs for inland spills and Coast Guard provides OSCs for marine spills. For more information, visit [www.nrt.org](http://www.nrt.org).

Within the Pacific Northwest, the NW Area Contingency Plan (NWACP) provides the overall operational structure for response. The NWACP is managed by a group of key stakeholders who form the Northwest Area Committee (NWAC). [www.rrt10nwac.com/nwacp](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/nwacp).

It is important to understand that spill responses are funded and managed differently from other large emergencies. For most large disasters, like a hurricane or landslide, the Stafford Act provides for federal support only at the request of states (by the Governor) and only for catastrophic events. In contrast to that, the National Contingency Plan is triggered by any hazardous materials spill and funding is available to support all response actions.

## What is an On-Scene Coordinator (OSC)?

An OSC is the primary representative from a jurisdiction who makes key decisions regarding oil and hazmat response actions. OSCs can represent the Federal, State, Local or Tribal jurisdiction. These individuals are physically at the response.

## What exactly does a TOSC/LOSC do?

The TOSC/LOSC sits within unified command in a spill response, along with state, federal, and industry representatives. All key response decisions are approved by Unified Command. If Unified Command cannot reach a consensus decision, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) has ultimate decision making authority.

*The LOSC/TOSC role is broad, but focused in two main areas: 1.) ensuring that local needs, priorities, and*  
July 2015



*concerns are reflected in the incident objectives and the decision making of unified command, and 2.) offering local resources to support the response and helping the response be more efficient and effective through tight coordination with the local community and government.*

The LOSC/TOSC should help facilitate effective communication between the response and their leadership at the local level. This will involve direct communication, but LOSC/TOSC should also ensure that response staff implement a plan for keeping local leadership consistently informed of response activities, challenges, and future actions.

## Who should fill the LOSC/TOSC role from a tribe or local government?

In general it is the emergency manager for the tribe, county, or city. It could be a tribal resource manager or other position as well. The NWACP does not specify who it needs to be, but it should be someone with a strong command of the Incident Command System (ICS), the authority to make decisions, knowledge of local resources and capabilities, and the ability to commit full time to the response.

## The NW Area Contingency Plan says that “unified command may incorporate TOSCs or LOSCs as appropriate.” How is “appropriate” decided?

If an impacted local tribe or government would like to participate in unified command, and there's no other TOSC/LOSC in place, chances are that it's appropriate and the other members of unified command will welcome the addition of local representation. Who is

filling the role of TOSC/LOSC should be one of the first questions asked by local government in the event of a spill with a unified command installed.

### **How are local jurisdictions notified of a spill?**

Notifications are required by law. Procedures vary by location and circumstance. If you have questions on how you will be notified, please contact your state or local emergency management office.

### **What if there is more than one seriously impacted jurisdiction? Can there be more than one LOSC/TOSC in unified command?**

Yes, there can be multiple LOSC or TOSC representatives but this needs to be carefully managed. Unified command needs to be a small, cohesive, and efficient body. In general, it is recommended that local governments and tribes work together to choose a single LOSC and TOSC to represent their interests, and then have deputies who attend all unified command meetings but speak through a single position.

### **Tell me more about who pays for a spill response?**

The Spiller is required by law to provide all measures necessary to mitigate the spill, including reimbursing local agencies for their expenses related to the response. If they are unwilling or unable to manage the cleanup effectively, the FOSC has immediate access to funds to hire cleanup contractors and reimburse local government for their expenses. The State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC) may have the same option.

There is a separate claims process for compensating citizens and businesses for their losses caused by the spill.

### **Should local or tribal government staff consider other roles?**

Absolutely. Depending on your jurisdictional interest and authorities, you may request from Unified Command approval to fill one or more of the following roles:

- Join Unified Command as the Local or Tribal OSC. This requires jurisdictional authority, adequate training, and the ability to commit full time to the response.
- Contribute information about sensitive resources to the Planning Section
- Add local knowledge to the Logistics Section or Operations Section



- Work through stakeholder issues with the Liaison Officer
- Work with the Information Officer in the joint information center to ensure your constituents are briefed appropriately.
- Work within the Operations section if you have significant tactical resources that will be deployed in the field.

### **How does someone prepare for the LOSC/TOSC role?**

- A solid background in ICS, with training up through the IS 400 class would be very useful (basic online ICS training is available through FEMA at <http://www.training.fema.gov/>)
- Participate in the regular meetings of the NW Area Committee (<http://www.rrt10nwac.com>)
- Take some time to understand the Geographic Response Plans (GRP's) in your jurisdiction, and review the NWACP and other resources available to responders on the website for the Regional Response Team (RRT) and NW Area Committee (NWAC) at <http://www.rrt10nwac.com>.
- Participate in as many spill exercises as possible, and forge relationships with partners in industry and the state and federal government. For a list of exercises, visit: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/naces/>
- Work to build relationship with potential stakeholders in your local community: people, agencies, and non-profits who are likely to be impacted by a spill and/or involved in the response.

### **I or my local partners may benefit from more information or training on spills in my jurisdiction. Who should I contact?**

Begin with the individuals listed as the contacts for the NW Area Contingency Plan. [www.rrt10nwac.com/nwacp](http://www.rrt10nwac.com/nwacp)