



- Washington Department of Transportation (360) 905-2135
- Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots (503) 673-1530

C. Oil or Hazardous Material Spill

1. Overview

Oil or hazardous material spills, as well as threats of spills, are regulated under the National Contingency Plan (NCP) and state laws. The response to a spill incident on the lower Columbia River will be “ramped up” to provide adequate equipment and trained personnel to effectively respond to the highest quantity of product that will most likely be released. Under the federal plan, response to spills or potential spills (like groundings) that affect state, tribal, or local waters are coordinated between agencies. Because of the nature of the Columbia River, spills can quickly impact both Washington and Oregon state waters. The USCG fills the role of Federal On Scene Coordinator for oil and hazardous materials spills on the navigable waterways in the Lower Columbia Region. Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) act as the State On Scene Coordinator(s) for spills and impacts to state waters. Together with the responsible party (the spiller), these agencies make up the Unified Command (UC). The UC coordinates responses, mitigation, and cleanup efforts for spills in the Lower Columbia Region to protect public health and safety, response personnel, and the environment.

The USCG, Washington State, and Oregon State have legal requirements for vessel response plans, including notification requirements if there is a spill or a potential spill. Any vessel over 400 gross tons must have a vessel response plan for oil and hazardous material spills that is approved by the USCG. Any non-tank vessel over 300 gross tons operating in Oregon and Washington waters must have a vessel response plan for oil spills that is approved by DEQ and DOE. For tank vessels of any size operating in Oregon and Washington waters, the vessel must have a vessel response plan that is approved by DEQ and DOE. These state requirements may be met by enrolling in the umbrella plan covering the Lower Columbia and Willamette Rivers or filing a plan submitted by the vessel owner or operator with the states. The umbrella plan for the Lower Columbia Region is managed by the Maritime Fire and Safety Association (MFSA).

2. Actions for an Oil or Hazardous Material Spill

- 1) **Stop the flow of product** by quickly closing valves and secure systems.
- 2) **Warn personnel of hazards** and enforce safety and security measures.
- 3) **Shut off the ignition sources** by stopping motors, electrical circuits, and restricting open flames.
- 4) **Contain/control the spill** by deploying boom or sorbent on the deck and in the water.
- 5) **Make notifications** to appropriate agencies/groups using your Vessel or Facility Response Plan.