

Sub-standard Tankers Pose Spill Risk

Proper nautical charts are a basic requirement for safe navigation, yet two loaded oil tankers recently arrived in Fidalgo Bay near Anacortes without them.

Spills Program vessel inspectors Guy Grayson and Dodge Kenyon each boarded tankers preparing to discharge cargo at March Point refineries and found them lacking nautical charts for the area. These violations of federal regulations resulted in Administrative Orders from Ecology requiring the companies operating the vessels to comply with all regulations and other planning requirements in order to operate in Washington waters. Further violations could result in penalties to the operators of up to \$10,000 per day for each violation.

Both ships had additional deficiencies cited by the inspectors.

Sub-standard operations of tankers coming into Washington waters may be a result of the tragic Olympic Pipeline explosion in Bellingham on June 10. As summer travel increased demand for gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel, the loss of supply through the pipeline forced distributors to use other means of transport.

Maintenance shutdowns at Ferndale-area refineries and the demand for fuel resulted in more tank ship and barge traffic. Refined products are being imported from faraway sources. Tanker traffic is up

significantly on Puget Sound and has more than doubled on the Columbia River since May.

Both of the ships cited loaded their cargoes in the West Indies and sailed through the Panama Canal on their way to Anacortes. The first ship, the PARNAR, used a chart with a scale of 1:1,020,000 to find the pilot station at Port Angeles, where a pilot boarded the ship. The ship's agent put local charts on board at Port Angeles, but through miscommunication the new charts were

for the route to Tacoma while the ship was headed for Anacortes. When the pilot with his local expertise disembarked at Anacortes, the ship lay at anchor with no local charts or knowledge.

Two weeks later, the DAVIDS SIKEIROSS repeated the PARNAR's story, but this time the same small-scale chart on board had been satellite-faxed to the ship. The original chart showed Rosario Strait and Guemes Channel area as a
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Ecology Resizing Response to Illegal Drug Labs

Methamphetamine labs and illegal meth dumps continue to make headlines around the state as many agencies struggle in the wake of this national plague.

"We're getting help from local law enforcement and some federal assistance, but we're all wondering what we're going to do as the workload just keeps growing," said Steve Hunter, spill response supervisor.

Since legislation was enacted in 1990, the Spills Program has carried the meth lab clean-up workload for the entire state. Ecology's regional response teams provide around the clock, onsite response and disposal services and have pioneered cost

saving procedures as response expertise grew in proportion to the meth lab numbers. But by 1998, funding and staff were seriously overextended (see Spring 1999, *Spill Scene*). This is particularly true for the southwestern region of Washington, where about 60-70 percent of meth lab responses occur.

Where possible, Ecology pursues cost reimbursement to recover some of these expenses. But cost recovery efforts tend to be ineffective when the responsible party (if identified) is without an income and in jail. Spill teams have been successful in cutting some costs. Contractor costs have been cut by
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more than \$100,000 a year by performing most of the removal and disposal work in-house. Responders have developed relationships with low cost disposal partners and pioneered innovative ways to depressurize waste cylinders. Some law enforcement agencies are helping by temporarily staging tanks and lab waste in safe storage so a single run can pick up multiple labs. And in the spring of 1999, Ecology received its first federal assistance in the form of access to the Drug Enforcement Administration's methamphetamine clean-up contractor.

But these efficiencies have run their course. As the lab numbers continue to soar, the response spill budget has stayed at 1994 levels. Cost cutting can only do so much. The 1994 budget was conceived to handle 30 to 50 labs per year. In just the first seven months of 1999, Ecology's teams have responded to 381 labs and roadside dumps.

"When we got into this business

in the early '90s, meth lab cleanup was an afterthought behind mainstream oil and haz mat spill response," said Hunter. "Now, in many places, meth is the mainstream, but the other duties continue too. We have to cut meth response to keep it from consuming bigger chunks of the program."

The strategy is twofold:

- ◆ Cut overtime costs by working with law enforcement agencies to clean up labs during the day.
- ◆ Use DEA contractors as often as they are available, especially in southwestern Washington.

"We have good relationships with local and state law enforcement," said Joe Stohr, spills program manager. "When we have to skimp on service, the burden falls on them and it's important that they understand the fix we're in."

Besides curtailing services, Ecology is participating in preliminary discussions with several other agencies over application for federal

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thumbprint-sized, featureless shape. The fax copy was even worse.

Spills Program vessel inspectors from the Puget Sound and Columbia River Field Offices board vessels to check compliance with Prevention Plans, Contingency Plans, and a long list of federal and international safety standards. Finding two tankers lacking appropriate nautical

charts for the area is surprising and a cause for concern.

Ecology's goal is to ensure that the gasoline shipped from the other side of the world makes its way to your gas tank, and not into the water from an accident.

For more information contact **Norm Davis** at (206) 389-2438, or e-mail at ndav461@ecy.wa.gov

Spills Program Goodbyes

Karen Hays has left state government to work for Alaska Tanker Company, in Portland, Oregon. Karen was a vessel inspector at Ecology's Puget Sound Field Office in Seattle.

Donna Musa is the new Environmental Reports Tracking Coordinator in Ecology's North-

west Regional Office in Bellevue. Previously, Donna was the Response Unit secretary there.

Sheila Hosner has changed jobs, from a spill responder in the Northwest Regional Office, to an enforcement inspector for the Water Resources Program in the same office.

assistance to combat methamphetamine manufacturing and use. At least one other state, California, has obtained a federal appropriation, but the process here has just begun. Any relief is one to two years off.

In Washington, the search for a suitable fund source is predictably difficult. The Toxics Control Account is used to fund meth lab response. But that fund is tightly squeezed, paying for six and seven figure cleanups of abandoned hazardous waste-contaminated sites. It has also been hit with large refunds to taxpayers based on recent court decisions.

"There appear to be no easy answers," said Stohr. "But seeking financial assistance for meth labs is one way to bring this ballooning problem into sharper relief as it competes for public funding."

For more information, contact **Steve Hunter** at (360) 407-6974, or e-mail at shun461@ecy.wa.gov

Spill SCENE

Spill Scene is published by the *Washington State Department of Ecology* to provide information on oil and hazardous substance spill prevention, preparedness and response. We welcome your comments and questions. Call (360) 407-7211 or write: Editor, **Spill Scene**, Department of Ecology, Spills Program, P.O. Box 47701, Olympia, WA 98504-7701.

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Risk Management Plan Effort Starts

Washington Governor Gary Locke signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Transportation on August 13, formally starting the process of developing a long-term Risk Management Plan to address vessel oil spill risks in the North Puget Sound area. The plan will cover the coastal approaches to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Strait itself, and the waters surrounding the San Juan Islands. This area is the primary transportation corridor for tankers bound for Washington's four biggest refineries, and for cargo and passenger ships headed for major Puget Sound ports and the Port of Vancouver, British Columbia.

The MOU confirms the federal/state partnership that will lead a panel of stakeholders through the process of developing the risk management plan. The federal partner is the U.S. Coast Guard Thirteenth District. The state partner is the Department of Ecology. The panel of stakeholders includes a broad range of individuals representing private and public sector organizations with a strong interest in oil spill prevention.

The stakeholder panel held its first meeting September 23 and 24 in Seattle. Monthly meetings are planned through June 2000. In June the panel is scheduled to present the risk management plan to Governor Locke and Admiral James Loy, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, via the Coast Guard's Navigation Safety Advisory Council.

Ecology is interested in developing new or enhanced measures to improve the safety of marine transportation, and response to vessel emergencies and

oil spills. As part of that effort, the department is beginning a deliberative rulemaking process. Measures under consideration include an emergency response system and dedicated emergency towing vessel, extending the state's tug escort requirement, and developing

an award for companies highly committed to safe and environmentally sound operations.

For more information, meeting minutes, or to get on a mailing list, contact **Jon Neel** at (360) 407-6905, or e-mail at jnee461@ecy.wa.gov.



Ecology Director Tom Fitzsimmons takes a first-hand look at the spill prevention and response capacity in Prince William Sound.

States/BC Task Force Meets

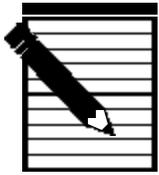
The States/BC Oil Spill Task Force commemorated its tenth anniversary by holding the 1999 Annual Meeting in Valdez, Alaska, on July 29. The 1989 EXXON VALDEZ oil spill in Prince William Sound, near Valdez, was one of the significant spills that led to the creation of the Task Force.

The meeting's theme was *Navigating the New Millennium*. It featured two discussion panels, on Ports and Waterways Safety Issues, and on Emergency Towing and Salvage. The lively and challenging panel discussions encouraged attendees to "think out of the box" when considering ways to improve oil spill prevention. The

Task Force also presented Legacy Spill Prevention Awards to seven individuals and organizations that had made significant and noteworthy contributions to oil spill prevention on the U.S. and Canadian West Coast.

The highlight of the trip, however, was a tour of oil spill prevention and response facilities and equipment in Prince William Sound. Tom Fitzsimmons, Ecology Director, said, "I am struck by the disparity between the prevention and response capabilities here in Prince William Sound and our capabilities in Puget Sound. Are Washington's waters less valuable?"

Upcoming Events



*Ecology welcomes
submittals of
notices of public
events related to
oil and hazardous
substance spill*

*prevention, preparedness and
response. Ecology reserves the
right to select events for publica-
tion. Please contact Mariann
Cook Andrews at (360) 407-7211
(e-mail: maco461@ecy.wa.gov)
for more information regarding
submittal deadlines.*

October 25 – 8:30 a.m.

States/BC Oil Spill Task Force
Fall Coordinating Committee Meeting
Ecology Headquarters Bldg., Rm. 2S-23
Contact: Jean Cameron, (503) 229-5720

October 28-29 - 12:30 p.m.

North Puget Sound Risk Mgmt. Panel
Port Angeles, WA
Contact: Jon Neel, (360) 407-6905

November 3 – 9 a.m.

Spills Prog. Oil Spill Advisory Comm.
Bank of California Bldg.
Seattle, WA
Contact: Vicki Flores, (360) 407-7452

November 10 – 9 a.m.

Resource Damage Assessment Comm.
Ecology Headquarters Bldg., ROA-36
Lacey, WA
Contact: Dale Davis, (360) 407-6972

November 18 – 9 a.m.

Washington Pilotage Commission
2911 Second Ave., Level B Conf. Rm.
Seattle, WA
Contact: Peggy Larson, (206) 515-3904

November 22-23

North Puget Sound Risk Mgmt. Panel
NOAA, Sand Point, Bldg. 9
Seattle, WA
Contact: Jon Neel, (360) 407-6905

December 8 – 9 a.m.

Resource Damage Assessment Comm.
Ecology Headquarters Bldg., ROA-36
Lacey, WA
Contact: Dale Davis, (360) 407-6972

December 8 – 10 a.m.

Puget Sound Marine Comm.
Port of Seattle Bldg.
Seattle, WA
Contact: Dave Schneider, (206) 728-3523

December 9 – 9 a.m.

Washington Pilotage Commission
2911 Second Ave., Level B Conf. Rm.
Seattle, WA
Contact: Peggy Larson, (206) 515-3904

December 20-21

North Puget Sound Risk Mgmt. Panel
NOAA, Sand Point, Bldg. 9
Seattle, WA
Contact: Jon Neel, (360) 407-6905

January 12 – 9 a.m.

Resource Damage Assessment Comm.
Ecology Headquarters Bldg., ROA-36
Lacey, WA
Contact: Dale Davis, (360) 407-6972

January 13 – 9 a.m.

Washington Pilotage Commission
2911 Second Ave., Level B Conf. Rm.
Seattle, WA
Contact: Peggy Larson, (206) 515-3904

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