

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: <b>7</b> Page: <b>Page 1 of 10</b> Revision: <b>08/30/2011</b>
<b>Media Relations</b>		

## 1. PURPOSE/SCOPE

This Media Relations protocol establishes policies and procedures for the exchange of information between U.S. Coast Guard District Thirteen (USCG) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) during incidents or events that pose, or simulate, an immediate threat to public health, safety and the environment.

Coordination of information maximizes resources, improves the accuracy and completeness of information released, and reduces duplication of efforts. It also ensures that the public and the media have a more accurate and timely understanding of actions taken by the USCG and Ecology during incidents and events that require a rapid, well coordinated and aggressive response.

This protocol provides guidance for coordinated responses to the media by Ecology and the USCG for events that are under both agencies' jurisdictions, and for the mutual sharing of information in developing timely news releases and key messages and talking points for media interviews.

## 2. AUTHORITY/REFERENCES

- a. Memorandum of Agreement on Pollution Prevention and Response between the Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District and the state of Washington executed on June 26, 2007 (Section IV – Information Sharing – Part C):

*The Parties agree to coordinate media relations for events in which both parties are involved to avoid conflicts that create public confusion; otherwise, each will refer the media to the other party for information under that agency's purview.*

- b. Northwest Area Contingency Plan - Area Planning Documentation  
9610 Public Information Procedures for Spills Incidents  
<http://www.rrt10nwac.com/NWACP/Default.aspx>

Joint Information Center (JIC) Manual:  
[http://rrt10nwac.com/Files/NWACP/Chapter\\_9610.pdf](http://rrt10nwac.com/Files/NWACP/Chapter_9610.pdf)

- c. Statutes
- i. Ecology: RCW 42.17.250 – 42.17.348, Public Disclosure
  - ii. USCG: 5 USC Sec. 552, Public Information; Agency Rules, Opinions, Orders, Records, and Proceedings
- d. Regulations: 49 CFR, Part 7, Public Availability of Information

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: 7 Page: Page 2 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011
<b>Media Relations</b>		

### 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This protocol will take effect immediately upon approval and signature by both parties.

### 4. POINTS OF CONTACT

The following people will serve as points of contact for questions concerning this protocol and its implementation:

#### a. ECOLOGY POINT OF CONTACT

i. *After regular business hours and on weekends and holidays:* Dial 360-701-7401.

ii. *During regular business hours (see [map of Ecology offices](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/org.html)).*  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/org.html>

#### iii. Northwest Regional Office

Public Information Officer

Phone: 425-649-7009

Mailing Address: 3190 – 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E., Bellevue, WA 98008-5452

#### Southwest Regional Office

Public Information Officer

Phone: 360-407-6239

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 47775, Olympia, WA 98504-47775

#### Bellingham Field Office

Public Information Officer

Phone: 360-715-5205

Mailing Address: 1440 - 10th Street, Suite 102, Bellingham, WA 98225

#### Central Regional Office

Public Information Officer

Phone: 509-575-2610

Mailing Address: 15 West Yakima Avenue, Suite 200, Yakima, WA 98902-3401

#### Eastern Regional Office

Public Information Officer

Phone: 509-329-3495

Mailing Address: 4601 North Monroe St., Suite 202, Spokane, WA 99205-1295

#### Headquarters Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Program

Public Information Officer

Phone: 360-407-6990

Washington Department of Ecology, Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program, P.O. Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: <b>7</b> Page: <b>Page 3 of 10</b> Revision: <b>08/30/2011</b>
<b>Media Relations</b>		

b. U.S. COAST GUARD POINT OF CONTACT

i. After regular business hours and on weekends and holidays: Dial 206-220-7237.  
(U.S Coast Guard personnel are available to answer this line after-hours and on weekends.)

ii. During regular business hours:

**13th Coast Guard District**

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: 206-220-7223

Fax: 206-220-7245

Mailing Address: Room 3584, 915 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA 98174-1067

**13<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District Public Affairs Detachment (PADET)**

Public Affairs Petty Officer

Phone: 503-861-6380

Fax: 503- 861-6339

Mailing Address: 2185 SE 12th Place, Warrenton (Astoria), OR, 97146

**USCG Sector Puget Sound**

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: 206-217-6002 (ask to be connected with the duty Public Affairs Officer)

Fax: 206-217-6348

Mailing Address: 1519 Alaskan Way S., Seattle, WA 98134

**USCG Sector Columbia River**

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: 503-861-6237, 503-861-6123

Fax: 503-861-6286

Mailing Address: 2185 SE 12th Place, Warrenton, OR 97146

**USCG Marine Safety Unit Portland**

Public Affairs Officer

Phone: 503-240-2551 or Sector Columbia River: 503-861-6237, 503-861-6123

Fax: 503-240-9369

Mailing Address: USCG MSU Portland, 6767 N Basin Ave., Portland, OR 97217

USCG/ECOLOGY MOA	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: 7 Page: Page 4 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011
<b>Media Relations</b>		

## 5. POLICIES

- a. Changes to contact information. It is the responsibility of the USCG and Ecology to keep each other apprised of any changes to the contact information listed above.
- b. Sharing information between the two parties. Under their respective jurisdictions, it is the policy of USCG and Ecology operational offices and field units to promptly share information with each other regarding incidents and events that likely will attract media attention. *Refer to USCG/ECOLOGY MOA Protocol 10 dated 6/26/07 - Information Sharing.*

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- The dispatching of the standby emergency response tug at Neah Bay to assist a vessel that is disabled or has lost maneuverability, subject to USCG Captain of the Port (COTP) operational measures.
- Evidence of illegal oil discharge by a vessel (e.g. oily-water separator bypass situations).
- Vessels at risk due to extreme weather conditions.
- Actual or potential oil spills.

## 6. OPERATING PROCEDURES

- a. *Internal Communication - Ecology process for providing information to its PIO*
  - i. During regular business hours - Ecology first provides the public information officer (PIO) in the appropriate region with the pertinent information. If the regional PIO isn't available, Ecology then provides the information to the PIO in its Spills Program.
  - ii. After regular business hours or on weekends and holidays - Ecology spills staff provide the pertinent information to the Ecology PIO who is on after-hours spills duty, by calling the 24-hour on-call number, 360-701-7401.
- b. *Internal Communication - Ecology process for directing media inquiries to its PIO.*
  - i. During regular business hours - Ecology first directs any media inquiries received during regular business hours regarding a spill incident or event to the PIO in the appropriate region. If that person isn't available, the inquiry will be directed to the Ecology's spills program PIO.



<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: 7 Page: Page 6 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011
<b>Media Relations</b>		

their professional scope should be referred to the unit PAO or to the District Public Affairs Office.

## 9. JOINT ECOLOGY-USCG RESPONSES TO MEDIA:

- a. News release style standards: News releases are to conform to Associated Press style standards and be easily understandable to someone with moderate reading ability.
- b. Establishing media leads: Media leads may be delegated based on which agency has the response/operational lead. The Regional Response Team/Northwest Area Committee prefers that a media lead be a representative of a state or federal agency rather than the entity who is responsible for the spill (“responsible party”). If questions arise as to who should assume the role of media lead, the parties should seek clarification from Unified Command.
- c. Timeliness of initial news release (30 minute window): As set forth in the Joint Information Manual under the Northwest Area Plan, agencies that have jurisdiction in responding to an incident are to quickly share information with each other, with the goal of issuing a joint statement to the media. The first news release should be issued within 30 minutes and no later than two hours after the initial notification ([http://rrt10nwac.com/Files/NWACP/Chapter\\_9610.pdf](http://rrt10nwac.com/Files/NWACP/Chapter_9610.pdf). (Attached is a sample of a typical initial joint news release.)
- d. Ecology backup plan for meeting initial news release deadline: Ecology will make every effort to reach USCG personnel in time to meet the 30-minute to two-hour deadline referenced above. However, if it is unable to do so, the Ecology PIO may have to rely on the approval of news releases and media advisories by Unified Command, if it has been established, or the agency’s lead responder.
- e. USCG backup plan for meeting initial news release deadline: Similarly, USCG personnel will attempt to contact the appropriate Ecology PIO in order to meet the 30-minute to two- hour window described above. If unable to do so, USCG will notify Unified Command, if it has been established.
- f. Sharing of pertinent news releases. As set forth in 9d and 9e above, there may be some instances where it is not possible for Ecology and USCG to issue a joint new release within required timeframes about an incident or event which involve both. If either Ecology or the USCG issues a news release as a sole agency, then each should share the news release with their respective counterparts as soon as possible.

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: 7 Page: Page 7 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011
<b>Media Relations</b>		

After regular business hours and on holidays and weekends, USCG will email pertinent news releases (those that pertain to any joint USCG-Ecology spill response) with the Ecology PIO on standby duty, and will alert the PIO at 360-701-7401 before issuing the release to the media.

Ecology will email pertinent news releases (those that pertain to any joint USCG-Ecology spill response) to the USCG's on duty Public Affairs Petty Officer before issuing the release to the media, and will alert the USCG at the Coast Guard 13<sup>th</sup> District media line (206) 220-7237 in Seattle.

The USCG member who is manning the duty public affairs office desk will be responsible for contacting other Coast Guard personnel, such as the Sector and Marine Safety Unit Public Affairs Officers, as appropriate.

## 10. MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

- How quickly USCG and Ecology are able to contact each other to share information about an incident or event, including those that occur after-hours.
- Number of attempts made before such contact occurs, with the goal of reaching the appropriate party on the first try.
- Percentage of initial press releases coordinated between Ecology and USCG made within agencies' standard (within 30 minutes of PIO notification that an incident has occurred).
- Ecology and USCG joint participation in annual exercises, drills, or actual incident responses involving public information and media relations coordination as a key focus for evaluation. *Goal: Jointly participate in at least one exercise or drill per year, such as a tabletop exercise or full-scale drill, where public information is a key focus for evaluation.*
- Percentage of media reports that accurately describe what is known about the incident and the respective roles and actions of the USCG and Ecology. *Goal: Jointly establish relationships with the media so that Ecology and USCG are seen by media as the first and most trusted sources of information.*

## 11. CONTINUITY

Ecology and USCG will share these policies and procedures with their respective new staff members, as appropriate.

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: 7 Page: Page 8 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011
<b>Media Relations</b>		

**12. APPROVAL**



M. S. GARDINER  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard  
Thirteenth Coast Guard District  
Chief, Prevention Division



DAVID WORKMAN  
Director of Communication & Education  
Washington Department of Ecology

Date: 9/9/11

Date: 8/30/11

<p><b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b></p>	<p><b>Protocols Manual</b></p>	<p>Procedure: 7 Page: Page 9 of 10 Revision: 08/30/2011</p>
<p><b>Media Relations</b></p>		

*(The following is an excerpt from the Joint Information Center Manual for the Northwest Area (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho) – communicating during environmental emergencies – Chapter 9610, Page 3, Change 12, dated 8/27/10.)*

**Initial Information Officer – Pre-JIC**

When an incident occurs, there is a high demand for quick information. Public perception is often shaped by impressions formed in the first few hours of a response.

When a state environmental or emergency management agency, the Coast Guard or the EPA first learns about a spill, the respective Information Officers should quickly contact one another to share information in an effort to release a joint media statement. **The goal should be to get this first release issued within 30 minutes of the initial notification and no longer than two hours after notification is received.**

Until a JIC is established, communication with the media and other key audiences is carried out by a lead agency’s information office, either remotely or on-site. This Initial Information Officer carries out activities with or without assistance. The time needed to travel to the command post and have basic JIC operations in place will affect decisions about how and by whom communications are conducted. For example, issuing the initial news release within 30 to 120 minutes of notification may require that facts be provided over the phone or electronically to an agency Information Officer operating from the office or a remote location.

The Initial Information Officer is concerned with both communications (who to communicate with, both media and public) and logistics (how to communicate), if operating from the command post or remote locations.

<b>USCG/ECOLOGY MOA</b>	<b>Protocols Manual</b>	Procedure: <b>7</b> Page: <b>Page 10 of 10</b> Revision: <b>08/30/2011</b>
<b>Media Relations</b>		

Template of initial joint news releases for a spill incident:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (date and time)

Contacts: \_\_\_\_\_, Department of Ecology media relations; (name, your office **and/or** work cell # -- or the stand-by phone #360-701-7401 **and/or** regular work cell #)  
\_\_\_\_\_, (other agency) media relations;  
phone/cell #

*Ecology and (federal, tribal, local agencies) responding to (oil spill/hazardous material release) in/at* \_\_\_\_\_

(DATELINE) – The state Department of Ecology, (other state and/or federal agencies, responsible party, tribal, local and county entities, and private cleanup contractors) are responding to an oil spill at/near \_\_\_\_\_ in county/city.

More information about the spill will be provided as soon as it becomes available.

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**Ecology Spills Program:** [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html)

**Ecology homepage:** [www.ecy.wa.gov/](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/)

**Ecology's social media:** <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/about/newmedia.html>