



Department of Environmental Protection

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Oil Spill Response Safety

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In any event, no matter what that event is, safety is the number one priority. Safety of the responders and safety of the public. Below you will find several resources that will guide you in the right direction. With regards to oil spill events here are a couple of items you should keep in mind.

1. What type of product am I responding to. Knowing what the product is will help you make the right response decisions. An MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) is a good resource to use to find out properties of a material. You can find a list of thousands of chemicals at www.MSDSONline.com.
2. Do I have the right PPE (personnel protective equipment)? Your response trailers are supplied with several different types of PPE. Using an MSDS will help you select the proper equipment to use during a response. **Selection of proper PPE and the assignment of work that is appropriate to your level of training should be directed by the ICS.**
3. **Specific to Shoreline responses:**
 - a) Ensure you have a safety briefing prior to work being conducted.
 - b) Ensure you have adequate manpower to achieve the task safely.
 - c) Create safe access to work area.
 - d) Be aware of tidal conditions.
 - e) Ensure adequate first aid stations are available.
 - f) Risks can be minimized by having good communications with crew.



4. **Specific to offshore responses:**

- a) Ensure you have a safety briefing prior to work being conducted.
- b) Water operations always carry the hazard of drowning. Make sure all responders are wearing proper Work Vests or a floatation device.
- c) Keep decks as clean and organized as possible.
- d) Risks can be minimized by having good communication between water operations and land operations.



- 5. The nature of response activities increases the risk of illness and injury to responders. Preventative measures need to be taken to protect responders from infectious diseases and from other health effects of the oil contaminated environments. Responders should be trained in first aid.
- 6. Extremes of temperature, humidity and precipitation all place considerable strain on human performance. Symptoms range from heat stroke, sunburn and dehydration at one end of the scale to frostbite and hypothermia at the other. Suitable and sufficient control measures need to be provided.
- 7. The most common forms of accident encountered during spill operations are slips, trips, and falls.



A safe response is a successful response. Please take the above items into account when responding to an event. Also, the attached websites will give you a more detailed outline for a safe and successful response.

Because workers need to be trained before they respond, you should train your emergency response workers to the highest level of responsibility they might need to assume. You should train your cleanup workers to the highest exposure conditions they may encounter. You must never expect or allow your workers to perform an emergency response or cleanup operation without proper training and certification.

Note: Participation in the Massachusetts DEP oil spill training class and boom deployment demonstration does not meet the requirements for OSHA certification.

Safety Information Links

[Training Marine Oil Spill Response Workers
Environment, Health and Safety Online](#)