

# **Debrief Summary**

## **Joint Pollution Response Training**

**Homer, Alaska**

**April 23-27, 2001**

### **Participants:**

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

MSO Anchorage

MSD Kenai

USCG Auxiliary

CISPRI, Inc.

Alaska Clean Seas

SEAPRO

Alyeska/SERVS

NAVSUPSALV: ESSM Base Anchorage

S.O.S. Response Team

Homer Harbor Department

## **General:**

Each participating organization conducted their own internal debrief to capture items unique to their operations, equipment and personnel. Those unique items are not included in this debrief summary. Items included in this report are those that carry over to joint operations, deal with safety, and execution of the training.

## **Areas of Emphasis:**

- **Safety:**

Homer 2001 presented all participants with increased risks for health and safety. The training was centered in a remote location, involved a large number of vessels, and included a wide variety of simulated beach clean up activities. Despite these increased risks, the only report received was a minor back sprain as the result of improper lifting techniques.

A thorough site safety plan, professional safety officers from the USCG and CISPRI, and daily safety briefs all contributed to a safe training environment.

Thanks to everyone for his or her attention to safety.

- **Communications:**

To ensure the safety and status of all participants, the command post tracked all vessels and personnel throughout the exercise. All vessels were instructed to check in and out when departing and returning to the harbor, and team leaders tracked personnel assigned and made daily reports. ADEC developed a communications plan that was distributed prior to the exercise.

ADEC provided command post radio communications using their new mobile command post. The mobile command post is a self-contained 24' trailer powered by 2 household batteries and/or 2 separate generators. The trailer was towed to Homer using ADEC's ¾ ton truck, and was set up in under an hour with just 2 personnel. The trailer is equipped with CB radio, marine VHF, State VHF, air band radios, cell phone antennas, heater, fax, scanner, printer and copier. The walls are "white board" and space is available for small meetings without disruption to radio operators.

The new mobile communications trailer, hardware and ADEC operators performed exceptionally well.

- **Equipment Deployment and Training:**

Day 1 focused on near shore and on shore operations in the Eldred Passage and Kasitsna Bay regions. The SEABULK MONTANA assumed the role of task force commander and coordinated the efforts of eight separate groups. The emphasis for this day was to train personnel

on the safe deployment and proper operation of response equipment, to practice boom deflection techniques, and to improve communications within the Task Force, and between the Task Force and the command post. An ICS form 204 was developed for each group, with assignments and instructions indicated. Personnel from all participating agencies were assigned to groups and became “workers” to gain valuable experience. Group assignments were as follows:

- Group 1: Hesketh Island: Deflection/Collection Booming
- Group 2: CISPRI Responder: Barge Lightering and Support
- Group 3: CISPRI Resolution: Skimming and USCG Barge Ops
- Group 4: SERVS: Current Buster Skimming
- Group 5: SEABULK MONTANA: Skimming and Command
- Group 6: Safety and logistics
- Group 7: NAVSUPSALV: Skimming
- Group 8: SOS: Booming and Skimming



Group 1: Unloads equipment for boom deployment on Hesketh Island. Day 1

Day 2 activities were conducted in the vicinity of Homer Spit, and included the below listed groups. Vessels and personnel were assigned different tasks from the previous day.

- Group 1: SEABULK MONTANA: Skimming and command
- Group 2: SERVS: Current Buster training
- Group 3: Shoreside “Boom Vane” Deployment
- Group 4: Safety and logistics
- Group 5: NAVSUPSALV: Barge Towing / Lightering
- Group 6: SOS: Skimming

**Specific Items:** Specific items noted during the group debrief are listed below:

**Safety Issues:**

- Observation: Vessels displayed good situational awareness, communications, and spacing during joint open water operations. Briefs at the start of each day and prior to operations stressed the importance of safety.  
Recommendation: In future training, continue to stress procedures that improve situational awareness and safety
- Observation: There was improvement in the tracking of vessels and personnel. A couple of times, small boats failed to check in/out with the command post. This caused some confusion until the suspect vessels were located and accounted for.  
Recommendation: Continue strict enforcement of vessel and personnel tracking at future events. Provide daily reminders to all operators.
- Observation: There was some discussion on the best process to track personnel who are not part of the permanent vessel crew, or are observers. Options included tracking as an individual, tracking “teams” with team leader responsible for daily accountability, or just tracking total numbers. No preferred option was identified. One recommendation was to have a daily sign in sheet noting work locations to assist in locating a specific person.  
Recommendation: Prior to the start of training, determine, assign and carry out a personnel tracking method to ensure all personnel are accounted for at the end of the day.
- Observation: As in the past, the communications center at the Command Post stayed operational until all vessels checked out for the day.  
Recommendation: For future exercises continue the practice of keeping the communication center operational until all personnel and vessels check out for the day.
- Observation: The USCG Auxiliary vessels are a vital safety asset and should continue to be used in future training.  
Recommendation: Continue to include the USCG Auxiliary in training as safety and VIP transport vessels
- Observation: One report was received of a minor back sprain from improper lifting. No missed work or other treatment was required.  
Recommendation: At daily safety briefs, continue to stress the importance of proper lifting procedures.

## Equipment Deployment:

- Observation: The MV RESOLUTION was tasked with towing the loaded 50' USCG Lancer barge in both a stern tow and on the "hip". The Resolution had a difficult time towing in the hip position.  
Recommendation: For situations requiring towing the Lancer barge on the hip, ensure the tow vessel is of a suitable length, mass, and horsepower to permit safe handling in all conditions.
- Observation: On Day 1, the skimmer for the "current buster" system could not be operated due to an incorrect hydraulic connector on the power unit for the case drain hose.  
Recommendation: For all skimming systems, ensure a spare parts box with all essentials is available for similar situations and on site repairs.
- Observation: The "current buster" skimming system was quick to deploy, and easily maneuvered and operated by readily available FVs with minimal guidance. The system requires 3 vessels: 2 tow vessels and a skimming vessel. The skimming vessel comes alongside, attaches to the boom, and lowers the skimmer into the "pocket" to collect oil. The currents running alongside the boom are very favorable to mooring the skimming vessel. Towing speeds varied from 1.5-3 kts, but the inside of the collection pocket was calm and provided excellent oil recovery conditions. Even during afternoon windy conditions with 3ft chop, the surface condition in the pocket remained much calmer and capable of collecting oil. One vessel should be designated as team leader to control the overall speed and direction of the team. The boom is easily towed to the scene by towing from the apex of the boom and trailing the leading ends.



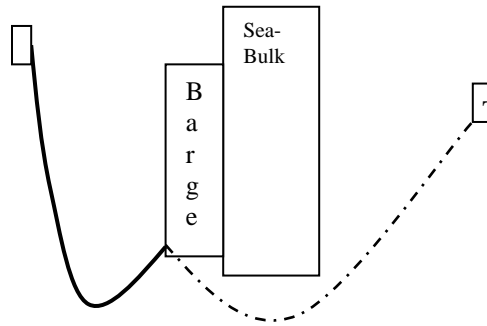
Current Buster shown during trials at OHMSETT testing facility.

Recommendation: The "current buster" was easy to deploy and operate in the near shore environment. Training requirements are minimal, and the system works effectively in currents up to 3.5-4 knots. Continue to use the system in a wide variety of training environments to maximize the exposure and training to a large audience of potential users

- Observation: The SEABULK MONTANA had no difficulty operating and deploying outriggers with a large fox tail skimmer in the confined areas of Kasitsna Bay or Eldred Passage.  
Recommendation: Continue to conduct training exercises in new areas to gain experience operating in different conditions.
- Observation: SOS deployed deflection booming and conducted skimming operations with the Barge 650 in the vicinity of McDonald Spit. Tow speeds during the skimming operations were at times excessive. The new landing craft vessel proved extremely useful in transporting equipment to the beach for deflection booming operations. This annual training continues to prove beneficial for training personnel and exercising equipment  
Recommendation: Continue annual involvement of SOS in this training, and increase their involvement in joint task force operations.
- Observation: The use of 4x4 on beach for logistics worked well in moving heavy objects on slippery beaches. The 4x4 may have prevented some slip, trips, and fall type injuries.  
Recommendation: Where possible, use mechanical equipment to haul heavy objects (anchors, coils line, etc) on beaches.
- Observation: The “Boom Vane” was initially deployed from the beach between the Lands End Hotel and the ferry pier. The vane was deployed on the last two hours of the ebb tide with an onshore wind of 15-20 kts. The current was estimated at less than 1.5 knots. Under these conditions, the vane performed marginally. The currents were not strong enough to overcome the on shore winds. Once the current dropped below 1.5 knots, the vane failed. The deployment site was then moved to attempt to locate a good site for the flood tide currents. Unfortunately, the site selected in front of the Lands End Hotel did not provide a good steady current greater than 1 kt, and the “vane” did not perform.  
Recommendation: Continue to expand and experiment with new types of technology in different situations to gain valuable experience in its use and limitations.



Boom Vane Deployment:  
Homer Spit.  
Day 2



- Observation: The diagram above illustrates two different skimming deployments from the SEABULK MONTANA and Barge CISPRI RESPONDER using 1000' of Ro-Boom. The dotted line deployment was difficult to accomplish with the tow vessel available. The weight and drag of the boom in this configuration was too large for the tow vessel to overcome. The solid line deployment worked well using the same equipment.  
Recommendation: Continue to use this training as an opportunity to experiment with different techniques and equipment to determine which works best.

### Command and Control:

- Observation: Overall, vessels did an excellent job of checking in/out, and reporting situations on water. A few small boats failed to properly report, which caused some confusion until the vessels were located.  
Recommendation: Continue to stress the importance of proper check in and out procedures. As necessary, detail procedure in the training incident action plan.
- Observation: The SEABULK MONTANA provided timely, accurate reports on operations to the command post for the entire task force. This reduced radio transmissions, and allowed the command post to update the situation boards.  
Recommendation: Continue to have Task Force Command Vessel report actions for entire task force.
- Observation: Tide cycle during the training presented some difficult challenges. Tides changed around noon each day, requiring shore booming teams to deploy for both flood and ebb tides. There was insufficient time during either cycle to thoroughly work the issues.  
Recommendation: Schedule training so that only one tide cycle occurs during training day.
- Observation: The daily safety and operations brief was conducted in the parking area of the Deep Water Dock. This saved time, and permitted personnel to break off into their groups, and depart quicker. The weather cooperated, and the outside meetings were dry, but adverse weather would reduce the effectiveness of the meetings. Vehicles were parked 'wherever' for the meeting, which may present problems for large groups.  
Recommendation: To the extent possible, continue to conduct morning safety and operations brief in the vicinity of the harbors to facilitate a rapid departure of vessels. To increase effectiveness of meeting, have loud speaker system available, and a large weather port or tent in the event of adverse weather. Use signs to indicate parking areas.

## Communications:

- Observation: ADEC's self contained mobile command trailer and the experience of ADEC radio operators worked well.  
Recommendation: Continue to task ADEC with communications responsibilities for exercises and actual incidents.
- Observation: A communication plan was developed prior to the exercise. VHF 11 was assigned as the command and control frequency, with CH18 assigned as the main task force working channel. On Day 1, the majority of task force working communications was carried over CH11, making it difficult at times for the command post to conduct radio comms due to all the traffic.  
Recommendation: Ensure communications plan is followed. Task force commander and group leaders should assign additional on site working channels as needed.
- Observation: Cell phone coverage was spotty. ATT and MacTel service providers had different rates of success in the Kasitsna Bay area.  
Recommendation: Identify cell phone numbers and service providers at the start of training.



ADEC's Command Center van.

### Future Training:

- Continue to conduct this joint operation in late April.
- Work in an area that provides a good mix of on shore, near shore, and offshore environments.
- Consult tides and select date with best tides to meet training objectives.
- Remain equipment focused, and continue to test new techniques and technology in innovative ways.
- Continue to incorporate shared logistics.
- Incorporate ICS sections as necessary.
- Continue to limit the role of observers, and instead use the training for majority of participants to conduct hands on training to gain experience.
- Explore the option of including boat-cleaning stations in the training.
- Continue to use the training to test protection strategies for sensitive areas.



NAVSUPSALV deploys  
Dracone.