

Homer 2004 - Joint Ops Training

General

On 14 April 2004 several different agencies from international, federal, state, and local government, local fisherman, and Industry met in Homer, AK to participate in a joint oil spill equipment training exercise.

The objective of the training was to safely deploy oil spill equipment in a training environment and “get some face time” with counterparts from other agencies. It provided a chance for all participants to either exercise their equipment and / or observe other types of equipment being deployed. It also provided the ability to practice booming strategies, setting up, receiving, and lightering a temporary storage bladder, testing different communication options, and combining operations to achieve a joint operations goal.



Tuesday 13 April 2004

Several participants arrived during the day and were able to pre-stage their equipment. An operations / safety brief was held at 1600. During the brief CISPRI announced their participation would be limited due to an unexpected shaft seal failure on the M/V Seabulk Montana. Most of the near shore equipment to be used for Thursday's operations was being transported by the M/V Seabulk Montana. As a result of the casualty Thursday's operations were cancelled. Wednesday's operations were modified to accommodate the decreased assets. Overall

operations included several different platforms and equipment. Although unfortunate, this type of equipment failure can occur in an actual event. This served as a learning experience for all participants.

Equipment Deployment

1,000 feet of row boom was deployed from a reel off the M/V Seabulk Montana (moored along side the CISPRI Responder Barge) and taken in tow by the fishing vessels Vinsaga and Kaguyak. The fishing vessels formed a gated u-shaped configuration, to simulate corralling oil. The CGC Hickory was the Task Force Commander. They were successful in deploying their Ships Oil Recovery System and Canflex Sea Slug temporary storage bladder. Once the recovery equipment was deployed, the CGC Hickory maneuvered in behind the two fishing vessels. Sunflower seeds were deposited into the water to simulate oil. When the seeds exited the gated section of the boom, it came clear to the Hickory they needed to position the ship roughly 50 feet from the boom, to skim effectively. This was a very effective prop that showed how oil may track in the water and should be used in future training exercises.



CISPRI was able to launch the M/V Resolution and conduct skimming operations along with the CGC Hickory. Alaska Chadux Corporation utilized their 24-foot skiff and towed the Canflex Sea Slug to the lightering station; they also helped CISPRI deploy 800 feet of containment boom around the lightering station. The CISPRI Responder Barge was set-up to receive the CGC Hickory's sea slug temporary storage device and was able to lighter roughly 1000 gallons of seawater. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation provided a Command Center (utilizing their mobile Command Center), which monitored all of the working radio frequencies. They helped design a joint operations communications plan and provided a check-in/check-out

station for personnel and equipment. The CG Auxiliary M/V Quanah P provided a safety and support platform and was instrumental in ferrying personnel to and from various locations.

Three oil spill responders from Sakhalin, Russia had the opportunity to observe the joint operations from the CGC Hickory.

Safety

At the beginning of the operation period for the day, a safety brief was given to responders by their subsequent safety representative. There were no safety violations and no personnel were injured. Weather was not an issue. To avoid any potential mishaps in future operations it was suggested to coil up and tie to the sea slug, or attach a safety buoy to the end of the 80-foot aft trailing towline. Although the towline has a brass eye and the weight of it sinks the end of the line, it would be easier and safer to see the end if it was tied up or a buoy attached to the end.

Comments / Suggestions

Lightering Operations

1. Continue to attach during deployment the 4 inch lightering hose on the Canflex Sea Slug. This allowed the lightering station personnel to easily attach their lightering equipment.
2. Initial communications between the Chadux 24-foot skiff and CISPRI was difficult, but later corrected.
3. Could have used some small line on board the 24-foot skiff.
4. Could have used more room inside the lightering station boom for maneuvering boat and temporary storage devise.
5. Set another anchor or two or increase the scope on the anchor lines.
6. Lightering and booming operations of the barge/small boat went well.
7. The Chadux skiff had problems maneuvering the sea slug inside the lightering station.
8. As discussed in safety, the aft towing line attached to the sea slug should be tied-up or a buoy attached to the end.
9. Towing and lightering of the sea slug was achieved with minimal difficulty.

Boom Deployment

1. Although the deployment/retrieval of the gated boom went well, it at times was tricky due to the changes in current.
2. The use of sunflower seeds to simulate oil was a positive training tool.

Communications

1. CISPRI identified the need to add VHF channel 81 to their communications pack.
2. If using more than one possible call-in frequency, such as 81 & marine 9, it would help the Command Center (that is monitoring multiple frequencies) if the caller would identify the channel their using and their name. For example, “ this is the M/V ### calling on channel 81”.
3. Use only one frequency from Command Center to field.

4. All task force units check-in on command frequency.
5. Use tactical channel for communications between Task Force Commander and task force units.
6. All vessels need a common frequency available at all times. One of the boom towing vessels was not able to hear/contact incident command from steering station.
7. Safety officer/vessel needs communications with all task force units.
8. Communications from Command to the CISPRI Responder was difficult at times. The suggestion was made to add channel 81 to the CISPRI handsets.
9. The Seal radio transmitted but did not receive.
10. The fax machine in the Command Center received all faxes well and was a useful tool for communications.

Skimming Operations

1. The M/V Resolution was able to deploy their Lori Brush system in 40 minutes.
2. The CGC Hickory was able to safely deploy their Ships Oil Recovery System. They identified a problem with the control valve on each control stand. A representative fixed the problem later in the week from Hyde Marine. As mentioned several times the sunflower seeds used to simulate oil helped the CGC Hickory identify the need to move within 50 feet of the gated boom to effectively skim.



Support and Safety

1. It was a plus having a support vessel to ferry people back and forth to different platforms.
2. Keep whoever is picking the dates of exercise. The weather was excellent.
3. From the viewpoint of the safety vessel all went very well.

General Comments

1. Incorporate a DECON station shore side for personnel and equipment in future exercises.
2. Improve initial coordination of participants upon arriving.
3. Participants should arrive with equipment in working order.

