

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



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Sector Juneau

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16465  
March 24, 2010

Captain Carl Uchytel  
Regional Response Team (RRT) Co-Chairman  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Seventeenth Coast Guard District  
P.O. Box 25517  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5517

Subject: PRINCESS KATHLEEN Defueling Operations

Captain Uchytel,

As noted in various briefings to date, on Friday, February 12, 2010, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Juneau and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) created a unified command and opened the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to conduct an assessment of the PRINCESS KATHLEEN based on increasing reports of oil sheen in the vicinity of the sunken vessel. Early assessments discovered bunker oil trapped inside the hull of the vessel and found that the oil is able to escape through broken portholes. While later assessments found the hull plating to have experienced only minimal wastage, the rivets were found severely corroded, allowing for oil seepage and potentially endangering long term stability of the shell plating. Additionally, underwater inspections have located trapped oil in various locations of the vessel and verified that oil is present in at least four starboard fuel oil wing tanks. Assessment and quantification measures are ongoing with hopes of completing them late next week, pending weather delays.

The Unified Command has determined that a significant threat of discharge continues to exist and that the risk can be safely mitigated by removing as much of the oil from the vessel as possible. Currently the Unified Command is exploring all options to conduct an operation to remove the oil. While the risk of a discharge during defueling operations is low, the Unified Command has proactively staged boom to protect sensitive environmental and coastal resources. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has provided trajectories in the unlikely event of a significant release. Based on the trajectories for the predominate weather conditions for the response area, an interagency team consisting of the Coast Guard, ADEC, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, identified sensitive areas and developed strategies to protect resources in these areas. Those strategies are being constantly revisited to ensure the greatest level of preparedness.

The Coast Guard has received permits/concurrence from the following offices regarding current operations:

- Alaska Department of Fish & Game (Title 16 Fish Habitat permit)
- Alaska State Historical Preservation Office
- Department of Natural Resource (ADNR), Division of Mining, Land and Water
- Department of Interior
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service (no permits required to date)

The Unified Command is approaching the final planning stages to move into the fuel removal process. We believe removal can be completed within 30 days of starting that phase and hope to start in early April. As we complete our assessment next week, we intend to hold a public presentation on April 1 and solicit any final input from the community regarding our findings and the emerging plans to remove fuel this Spring. In anticipation of this progress, we are soliciting any final concerns stakeholders may have that we should consider before making our final determination and moving forward with defueling operations. We hope to receive that feedback by Monday, March 29.

In your role as RRT Co-Chairman, and as a conduit to a number of agencies and partners that we work with routinely through the RRT, I request that you please forward this letter to our RRT partners for their information and awareness. We look forward to further briefing the RRT at the next semi-annual meeting. Please feel free to contact me if I may offer any further information or assistance. Thank you for assisting in our efforts to maintain a positive flow of information.



M. N. JONES  
Commander, U. S. Coast Guard  
Deputy, Federal On-Scene Coordinator

Copy: Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (SOSC)