Council Briefs

Newsletter of the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council December 2009

"The mission of the Council is to represent the citizens of Cook Inlet in promoting environmentally safe marine transportation and oil facility operations in Cook Inlet"

This Is Only a Drill...

In December, Tesoro conducted a spill drill that centered on a pipeline breech that leaked jet fuel into the Swanson River. Cook Inlet RCAC staff attended the drill and participated at the Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response Inc. (CISPRI) command center and observed the field deployment.

The extremely cold temperatures and recent heavy snowfall added an extra degree of difficulty to the response. Response operations began with site characterization, which was performed by Tesoro safety personnel aided by CISPRI spill technicians. Site characterization determines the correct level of personal protective equipment to be worn by responders and delineates the size, location, and concentration of the spill - as well as other hazards located in and around the spill site. Site characterization was performed quickly and thoroughly. Once site characterization had been completed, response task forces were deployed to three locations to control, contain, and recover the spilled fuel.

CISPRI Spill Technician uses an ice auger on the Swanson River

Three task forces were deployed to three different areas along the spill path. The first task force was sent to control the fuel leaking from the broken pipeline, which was draining through a culvert and migrating toward the Swanson River. The second task force was sent to locate fuel in the river, and contain it for recovery. Once the fuel was located, slots were cut through the ice in a "V" or chevron pattern using a special hand operated ice saw that can cut through ice as thick as four feet. An ice auger was used to drill a hole at the apex of the chevron to allow a pump to remove the concentrated flow of fuel and water. Two chevron collection sites

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 1	Cook Inlet RCAC Offices Closed
January 18	Cook Inlet RCAC Offices Closed
January 18 - 22	Marine Science Symposium - Anchorage
February 5	PROPS Meeting - Kenai
February 8 - 12	Alaska Forum on the Environment - Anchorage
February 15	Cook Inlet RCAC Offices Closed
March 26	Cook Inlet RCAC Annual Meeting - Kenai

Tesoro Pipeline Drill (cont)

were set up to maximize the recovery of spilled fuel.

The recovered liquids were then pumped to a portable holding tank, which was the first stage in a two stage process. The second stage was to pump the recovered fluids from the portable tank, up a hill to another portable tank located near the roadway. Once the second portable tank was full, a vacuum truck could remove the fluids to be taken to a final storage tank where it will be allowed to thaw and decant - to determine how much fuel was recovered.

CISPRI Spill Technicians break ice during a response simulation

The third task force was sent to establish a path to the mouth of the river and to deploy containment boom to capture any fuel that may have escaped upstream recovery efforts.

Due to the extreme weather conditions and the rough terrain created by the ice and snow, it was determined that only by airlifting equipment and personnel to the mouth of the river could this tactic be employed. Air operations would be delayed due to a low ceiling cause by fog.

Response personnel consisted of CISPRI personnel and Immediate Response Team (IRT) members made up of Tesoro personnel. In order to hone the response skills, IRT members train year round and alongside CISPRI spill technicians. Despite the harsh climate and rough conditions, response crews performed well. While, some deficiencies were encountered due to the low temperatures and remote location, they did not prevent recovery operations from continuing - as back up equipment and tactics were used. Overall the recovery operations were executed safely and proficiently.

Council Election

Four seats on Cook Inlet RCAC's 13 – member Board of Directors will expire March 26, 2010. The seats represent: the City of Seldovia, the Municipality of Anchorage, the State Chamber of Commerce and Recreational Interests.

The two municipal seats are appointed by their respective mayor or city council and serve for three years. The State Chamber of Commerce also appoints their representative. The Recreational Interest Group seat is elected by the member groups in that category. Groups whose focus is on recreational activities in Cook Inlet should contact Karen Delaney at delaney@circac.org or 907-283-7222.

Marathon

Prior to the Tesoro drill and deployment, Marathon Oil Company also held a drill at the CISPRI command center to exercise new employees or employees who had not participated in the Incident Command System. The drill scenario centered on a leak in the Beaver Creek heater treated.

As the drill progressed, the containment area that held the large volume of oil leaked oil had cracked and oil was beginning to spill out toward the creek. An additional inject resulted in a call to the fire department as flames from the gas release threatened the leaked oil. To ensure that the new employees were kept on track, each novice worked along side a more experienced member of the team.

Overall the drill provided a good learning experience for Marathon employees. Following the drill CISPRI technicians gave new Marathon employees a tour of the facility and equipment yard.

New Image(s) for ShoreZone

Over the summer, Cook Inlet RCAC coordinated efforts for a ShoreZone imaging survey for all of Cook Inlet's shorelines. While Cook Inlet RCAC had already surveyed and mapped all of Cook Inlet during a three year period from 2001 -2003, those surveys bridged the time period when technology changes were made to the ShoreZone protocols. One of those changes included the transition from slide film to digital imagery for the still photography. Likewise, video technology had also gone through a considerable improvement since the last surveys were conducted.

ShoreZone image of Anchorage coastline

Since Cook Inlet is at the center of much of Alaska's shipping industry activities and has proven to be at risk from various oil spill risks, the RCAC felt the need to collect the best possible imagery for the area with some of the biggest risks for shoreline impacts as warranted. This much improved imagery replaced imagery that was pieced together from earlier, lower resolution surveys that took place over a three-year period.

Cook Inlet RCAC coordinated these efforts and a team from Coastal and Ocean Resources, Inc. and from NOAA's Auke Bay Laboratories collected the imagery. During a 6-day low tide series, the surveyors obtained high resolution digital video imagery of all of Cook Inlet's coastline at low tide and over 13,000 high resolution digital still photographs.

ShoreZone (cont)

These images are being linked to the mapped data obtained in earlier surveys and will soon be provided online on NOAA's ShoreZone website at:

http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/maps/szintro.htm.

Cook Inlet RCAC is also developing a stand-alone oil spill planning and response tool that will make these low-tide, high-resolution video and images available to On-Scene Coordinators and to Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response, Inc.

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