



First Responder Training and Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) Testing Exercise Series – Onset, Wareham

After-Action Report

September 23, 2024

The After-Action Report (AAR) aligns exercise objectives with the preparedness doctrine and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Table 1: Exercise Overview

Exercise Name	2024 Onset/Wareham FR Exercise
Exercise Date	September 23, 2024
Scope	This was a full-scale exercise planned for approximately six hours at Little Harbor Beach in Wareham, MA. Exercise play was ultimately conducted at Onset Pier and limited to Onset Bay and the adjacent shoreline.
Mission Area(s)	Prevention, Protection, Response
Capabilities	Environmental Response/Health and Safety, Operational Coordination, Operational Communications
Objectives	<p>Demonstrate the ability of local first responders to:</p> <p>Objective 1: Conduct initial response activities within the first 4-6 hours of an oil spill incident by deploying MassDEP oil spill response equipment and implementing common Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) tactics in alignment with the MassDEP GRS Tactics Guide.</p> <p>Objective 2: Establish and maintain command and control in the first 4-6 hours of an oil spill incident response by identifying relative health and safety hazards, developing an initial response organization, and communicating response objectives, strategies, and tactics through the completion of an Incident Briefing form (ICS 201) and the facilitation of an Operations and Safety Briefing.</p> <p>Objective 3: Communicate information and actions between multiple local, state, and federal agencies within the first 4-6 hours of an oil spill incident by identifying a common UHF or VHF radio channel that can be utilized by all participants.</p>
Threat or Hazard	Discharge of oil into a navigable waterway
Scenario	An oil spill has occurred that threatens Onset Bay. The Onset Fire Department and Wareham Department of Natural Resources staff will utilize various common Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) tactics to protect sensitive resources in Onset Bay and the surrounding area.
Sponsor	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Participating Organizations	<p>Participating organizations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onset Fire Department • Wareham Department of Natural Resources • United States Coast Guard MSD New Bedford • MassDEP • Moran Environmental Recovery (MER) • Nuka Research
Point of Contact	<p>Julie Hutcheson, Marine Oil Spill Prevention & Response Program Coordinator Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program 100 Cambridge St., Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114 (617) 366-7424 julie.hutcheson@mass.gov</p>



Figure 1: Participants learn about sorbents and culvert plugs



Figure 2: Participants learn how to configure a shoreside anchor system



Figure 3: Participants practice tossing a heaving line

Pictures courtesy of Nuka Research and Planning Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exercise Planning

In preparation for the Onset/Wareham exercise, both an Initial and Final Planning Meeting (IPM/FPM) were held with members of the Exercise Planning Team (EPT). The EPT was comprised of senior personnel from each of the participating organizations listed in the Exercise Overview section.

The following deployment plans were developed:

- Test DV01b from GRS #BB24

Exercise Conduct

Exercise controllers and senior participant personnel monitor weather forecasts and may also conduct pre-deployment site surveys to identify limitations and obstructions that could impact the deployment plan as described above. Deployment plan modifications (if necessary) and observed exercise-day conditions are detailed below.

The following deployment activities were completed:

- Due to low water depths at the Little Harbor location and a limited number of exercise participants, Command Staff decided to change the deployment location to Onset Pier and modify deployment plans to deploy 300ft of containment boom around a moored vessel located east of the Pier.

Table 2: Summary of Observed Conditions

Factor	Observed Conditions
Wind speed and direction	5 mph, NE
Tidal conditions	Flooding tide
Water depth (approx.)	5-10ft
Wave action & Current speed (approx.)	Minimal
Vessel traffic	Moderate
Harbor mooring field density	Moderate
Other observations	Harbor seals



Figure 4: Exercise Tactics Map

EXERCISE REPORT

Objective 1: Conduct initial response activities within the first 4-6 hours of an oil spill incident by deploying MassDEP oil spill response equipment and implementing common GRS tactics in alignment with the MassDEP GRS Tactics Guide.

Strength: Vessel and shoreside crews worked well to properly stage the response trailer on the pier and unload 300ft of boom, load marine anchor systems onto vessels, then utilize the heaving line to transfer boom from the pier to an awaiting on-water vessel prior to tow.

Strength: The towing vessel effectively towed 300ft of boom from the pier to the deployment location east of the pier. After arriving at the deployment location, vessel crews effectively configured four marine anchors to complete the containment array.



Figure 5: Crews load anchors onto awaiting vessels

Objective 2: Establish and maintain command and control in the first 4-6 hours of an oil spill incident response by identifying relative health and safety hazards, developing an initial response organization, and communicating response objectives, strategies, and tactics through the completion of an Incident Briefing form (ICS-201) and the facilitation of an Operations and Safety Briefing.

Strength: Command Staff quickly developed and communicated deployment plans and changes to all participants.

Observation 1: Several changes to deployment plans led to some confusion amongst participants that ultimately slowed the process of deploying the containment array.

Analysis: Upon arriving at Onset Pier, Command Staff identified an initial plan that involved deploying 100ft of containment boom around a docked vessel at the pier. After some consideration, Command Staff agreed to change the deployment location to a nearby mooring east of the pier and modify the deployment plan to 300ft of boom instead of 100ft (to create a larger area of containment and test deployment of multiple marine anchor systems).



Figure 6: Crews position 300ft of boom around a vessel and barge at a mooring

Objective 3: Communicate between multiple local, state, and federal agencies including fire, police and harbormaster departments using VHF and UHF communications.

Strength: Command Staff pre-identified a common radio frequency as the primary communications channel for the exercise and effectively directed participants to join the channel.

Strength: Vessel and shore teams maintained excellent communications throughout deployment.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS & RESOURCES

Table 3: List of Participants

Participating Organizations	
Town of Wareham, MA	Participant Count
Onset Fire Department	5
Wareham Department of Natural Resources	2
TOTAL TOWN/CITY PARTICIPANTS	7
State	
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)	3
Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC (contractor for MassDEP)	2
Moran Environmental Recovery (contractor for MassDEP)	3
Federal	
United States Coast Guard MSD New Bedford	2
TOTAL	17

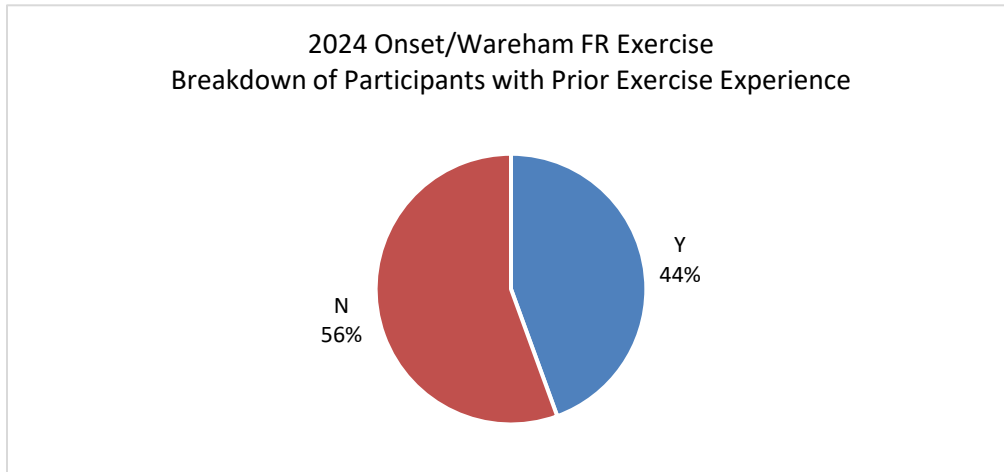


Figure 1: Previous Exercise Participation

Table 4: List of Resources

List of Resources			
Agency	Resource	Kind	Exercise Function
Onset FD	25' Safeboat	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Wareham DNR	18' Skiff	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Wareham DNR	25' Inflatable	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Wareham	Oil spill response trailer	Trailer	Boom Deployment & Trailer Training