



First Responder Training and Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) Testing Exercise Series

Boston, Winthrop, Massport

After-Action Report

May 14, 2025

The After-Action Report (AAR) aligns exercise objectives with 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	2025 Boston/Winthrop/Massport Geographic Response Strategy Exercise
Exercise Date	May 14, 2025
Scope	This full-scale exercise was planned for approximately six hours at Orient Heights Yacht Club in East Boston, MA. Exercise play was limited to the Belle Isle Inlet and the adjacent shorelines.
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 health and safety hazards, developing an initial response organization, and communicating 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 Belle Isle Marsh and the surrounding areas. The Boston and Winthrop Fire Departments and Police Department/Harbormasters, and the Massport Fire Department will utilize various common Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) tactics to protect sensitive resources in these areas.
Sponsor	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Participating Organizations	<p>Participating organizations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boston Fire Department/HAZMAT • Boston Police Department/Harbormaster • Winthrop Fire Department • Winthrop Harbormaster • Massport Fire Department • Massport Environmental Team • Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries • United States Coast Guard Sector Boston • 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 100 Cambridge St., Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114 (617) 366-7424 julie.hutcheson@mass.gov</p>



Figure 1: Participants practice connecting sections of boom



Figure 2: Participants practice configuring a shoreside anchor system

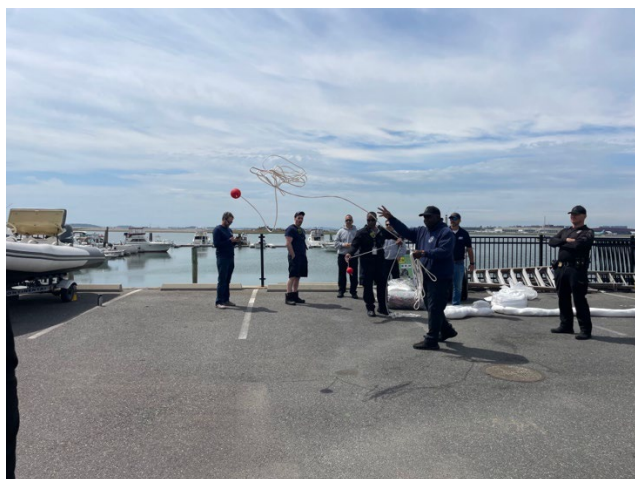


Figure 3: Participants practice throwing heaving line



Figure 4: Participants learn about the components of marine anchor systems

Photos courtesy of Nuka Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exercise Planning

In preparation for the Boston/Winthrop/Massport exercise, both an Initial Planning Meeting (IPM) and a Final Planning Meeting (FPM) were conducted with members of the Exercise Planning Team (EPT). The EPT consisted of senior personnel from each of the participating organizations listed in the Exercise Overview section.

Initial Planning Meeting

A hybrid Initial Planning Meeting (IPM) was held via Zoom and in-person at the Winthrop Town Hall (1 Metcalf Square, Winthrop, MA, 02152) on Tuesday, March 18th, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

Purpose

The purpose of the IPM was to discuss and identify logistical requirements for the exercise, including the date, classroom and deployment locations, personnel and vessel needs, and any additional operational considerations.

Participants

Table 2: IPM Participants

Name	Title/Rank	Department/Organization
Joshua Delisle	Sargeant	Boston Police Department
Ryan McGovern	Captain	Boston Fire Department
Stephen Calandra	Lieutenant	Winthrop Fire Department
Jill Dorr	Clerk	
Dennis DeCarney	Deputy Harbormaster	Winthrop Harbormaster
Kevin Janielis	Deputy Shellfish Warden	
Mike Barker	Marine Unit Supervisor	MassPORT
Madeline Soule	Environmental Manager	
Britany McKibben	CWO	USCG Sector Boston

Outcomes

A summary of key IPM outcomes is provided below. Additional details are available in the exercise ICS-201.

- **Exercise Date:** Wednesday, May 14th
- **Classroom Location:** Orient Heights Yacht Club (61 Bayswater St, East Boston)
- **Deployment Location(s):** Orient Heights Yacht Club (61 Bayswater St, East Boston)
- **Additional Resources:** N/A
- **Deployment Notes:** MassPORT's Saratoga St property (site of tactic shoreside anchor) is not accessible by foot above the high tide mark. The EPT discussed accommodations to ensure crews avoid operating in this area.

Final Planning Meeting

A Final Planning Meeting (FPM) was held via Zoom on Wednesday, April 30, from 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM.

Purpose

The purpose of the FPM was to review the draft ICS-201 to validate exercise logistics confirmed during the IPM and to discuss any outstanding operational details needed to support the on-water deployment.

Participants

Table 3: FPM Participants

Name	Title/Rank	Department/Organization
Christopher Colby	Chief	Boston Police Department
Joshua Delisle	Sargeant	
Ryan McGovern	Captain	Boston Fire Department
Mike Barker	Marine Unit Supervisor	MassPORT
Madeline Soule	Environmental Manager	
Mary Orlando	Environmental Compliance	
Sarah Ray	Environmental Specialist	

Outcomes

A summary of key FPM outcomes is provided below, including a description of deployment plans.

- Complete the deployment of a modified 500ft EX02b tactic from the Winthrop BH01 GRS

Exercise Conduct

Exercise controllers and senior participant personnel monitor weather forecasts and may also conduct pre-deployment site surveys to identify any physical or environmental limitations that could impact execution of the deployment plan. Any necessary adjustments to the plan and the conditions observed on the day of the exercise are summarized below.

Table 4: Summary of Observed Conditions

Factor	Observed Conditions
Wind speed and direction	11 mph, S/SW
Tidal conditions	Flooding tide
Water depth (approx.)	8.8 ft
Wave action & Current speed (approx.)	Moderate current
Vessel traffic	Low
Harbor mooring field density	Low
Other observations	None



Figure 5: 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: Shoreside crews worked together to properly stage the response trailer in proximity to the boat ramp, unload 500ft of boom, load marine anchor systems onto the appropriate vessels, and conduct shore-to-vessel transfer using a heaving line. Two work vessels then transited to the deployment location by loading a 200 ft segment of boom onto one vessel for transport and towing the remaining 300 ft segment behind the second vessel.

Strength: Vessel crews safely disembarked the vessel at the deployment location, effectively configured a shore anchor system, then connected the first section of boom.

Strength: After connecting the first leg of boom, vessel crews successfully attached the second section, then dropped a marine anchor to complete the diversion array. Peat moss was deployed to test the tactic but never impacted the array due to minimal current conditions.



Figure 6: Crews prepare to transfer boom to the vessel for deployment

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: The Boston FD Incident Commander (IC) quickly identified a Safety Officer (SO). Together, the IC and SO coordinated shore and vessel crew assignments, then effectively communicated deployment plans, roles and responsibilities, and operational safety considerations through an Operations and Safety briefing. Each vessel was given a specific operational assignment, allowing for efficient and effective boom and anchor deployment.



Figure 7: Vessel crew connect two segments of boom to complete the 550 ft diversion array.

Strength: Command staff, vessel crews, shoreside crews, and trailer support personnel were able to safely and effectively coordinate all deployment activities.

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

Strength: The Boston Fire Department IC pre-designated the Mobile Radio Communications (MRC) system as the primary communications channel and directed participants to join the channel during the Operations and Safety briefings.

Strength: All crews demonstrated excellent communication skills, allowing for adjustments to be made safely and effectively. This was especially critical while operating across a large area with multiple dispersed shoreside and on-water resources.



Figure 8: View of the deployed tactic from the observation vessel

PARTICIPANTS & RESOURCES

Table 5: List of Participants

Participating Organizations	Participant Count
City of Boston, MA	
Boston Fire Department/HAZMAT	10
Boston Police Department/Harbormaster	5
City of Winthrop, MA	
Winthrop Fire Department	3
Winthrop Harbormaster	2
Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport)	
Massport Fire Department	9
Massport Environmental Team	3
TOTAL TOWN/CITY PARTICIPANTS	32
State	
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF)	1
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)	2
Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC (contractor for MassDEP)	2
Moran Environmental Recovery (contractor for MassDEP)	3
Federal	
United States Coast Guard Sector Boston	4
TOTAL	44

2025 Boston/Winthrop/Massport Exercise Breakdown of Participants with Previous Exercise Experience

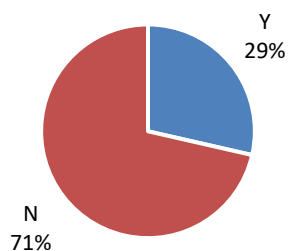


Figure 9: Previous Exercise Participation

Table 6: List of Resources

List of Resources			
Agency	Resource	Kind	Exercise Function
Boston FD	20' Marine Unit 2	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Boston PD/HM	27' Center Console	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Winthrop HM	25' Center Console	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Massport	25' Center Console	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Massport	43' Metal Shark	Vessel	Safety/Support
Boston FD	Oil spill response trailer	Trailer	Training/Boom Deployment
Orient Heights Yacht Club	Water Source	Hose	Support