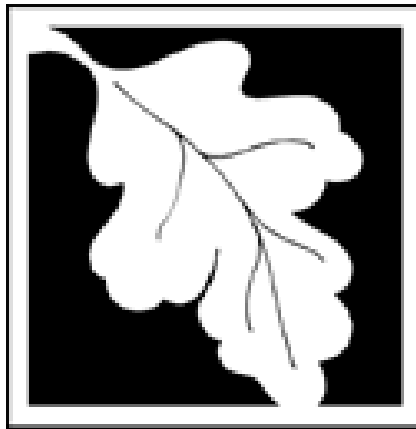


**Mt. Hope Bay Geographic Response Plan Deployment
Exercise**

July 26, 2011

**AFTER ACTION
REPORT/IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

August 2011



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HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

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2. The information gathered in this AAR/IP is unclassified.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise occurred on July 26, 2011. The Geographic Response Plan for Mt. Hope Bay was developed as a tool specifically for the exercise, since no GRP exists at this site (See Figure 1). The goal was to deploy a closed chevron boom array, utilizing as many responders as possible to provide hands-on experience with oil spill response equipment and pre-evaluating the site to determine feasibility as an actual GRP location.

Figure 1. Map of Coles River



The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Response Plan Program exercise at Mt. Hope Bay was developed to test local area first responder's Planning, Communications, and Community Preparedness and Participation capabilities. The exercise planning team was composed of numerous and diverse agencies, including the Swansea Fire Department, Somerset Fire Department, Somerset Harbormaster Department, Swansea Harbormaster Department, Swansea Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and Nuka Research and Planning Group (contractor) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Participants gathered during briefing



The exercise planning team discussed staging and field locations, manpower and vessel needs, timing of the exercise in relation to tidal schedule, and establishing objectives. Over four months there were two group meetings, one teleconference, and multiple email communiqués. The exercise objectives were focused on inter-agency planning and coordination, communication and on site incident management for the purpose of improving initial response capacity to oil spills in the towns of Swansea and Somerset.

The exercise planning team also considered proposed locations for the boom deployment and their feasibility in terms of access, staging, mobilization/demobilization of equipment, low vessel traffic, and tidal schedule (See Figure 3). Once the site was chosen, the team focused on equipment and manpower needs and scheduling the exercise at a date and time that was optimal for availability of responders and tide cycle.

Figure 3. Ocean Grove Drive boat ramp staging area



Based on the exercise planning team's deliberations, the following objectives were developed for the Mt. Hope Bay Geographic Response Plan exercise.

- Objective 1: Foster inter-agency planning by providing the opportunity for local responders to work with Federal (USCG) and State (MassDEP) responders to plan for and deploy a GRP protective booming tactic during a simulated incident.
- Objective 2: Promote communication among responders from vessel to vessel and vessel to shore and assess ability to establish and utilize effective interoperable communications plan.
- Objective 3: Provide opportunity for responders to increase level of preparedness for oil spill response and gain experience by participating in an oil spill boom deployment.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

- Local agencies worked smoothly together to achieve objectives
- Local responders indicated ability to make adaptations as needed
- Communications were clear and concise

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement in the towns of Swansea and Somerset's ability to respond to the incident were identified. The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

- First responders would benefit from additional opportunities to practice boom deployment in a variety of environmental conditions.
- Common tactics frequencies would be useful for actual incident; both towns used Swansea Fire radios for this exercise (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Swansea Portable radios



Overall, the exercise was successful in providing an opportunity for first responders to deploy boom and achieve a common goal with inter-agency participation. Further exercises would be welcome to continue to coordinate between the two towns, to incorporate other local towns, and to gain experience.

SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Details

Exercise Name

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay Geographic Response Plan Deployment Exercise

Type of Exercise

Functional Exercise

Exercise Start Date

July 26, 2011

Exercise End Date

July 26, 2011

Duration

Four and a half hours

Location

In briefing took place at the Swansea Fire Station at 50 New Gardner Neck Road and field exercise followed at the Ocean Grove Boat Ramp on the Coles River, in the town of Swansea, Massachusetts.

Sponsor

The Massachusetts DEP was the sponsor of the exercise, with input from the United States Coast Guard and facilitation by Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC (contractor to MassDEP).

Program

Massachusetts GRP Exercise Program

Mission

This exercise was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to practice protective booming of a sensitive area in response to a simulated oil spill.

Capabilities

Planning, Communications, Community Preparedness and Participation

Scenario Type

The scenario is a simulated oil spill in Mt. Hope Bay

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Participating Organizations

Participating organizations included: Swansea Fire Department, Swansea Emergency Management Agency, Swansea Harbormaster Department, Somerset Fire Department, Somerset Harbormaster Department, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Dominion Power, Massachusetts Environmental Police, United States Coast Guard District 1, United States Coast Guard Sector Southeast New England, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Moran Environmental, and Nuka Research and Planning Group.

Number of Participants

- Players - 24
- Controllers - 1
- Facilitators - 2
- Observers/Evaluators - 16

SECTION 2: EXERCISE DESIGN SUMMARY

Exercise Purpose and Design

Geographic Response Plans (GRP) are tactical oil spill response plans tailored to protect a specific sensitive area from impacts following a spill. GRPs are developed by collaborative work groups that include local, state, and federal agencies, natural resource organizations, spill response organizations, and the oil industry. GRPs are incorporated into the state/federal Area Contingency Plans for oil spill and hazardous materials response. The Area Contingency Plan implements the National Contingency Plan and aligns with the National Response Framework. Once the GRPs have been published in the Area Plan, the next step in the planning and preparedness process involves exercising the GRPs to (1) field verify the resources and tactics identified in the GRP and (2) provide a hands-on opportunity for local responders to practice deploying spill response equipment.

The MassDEP GRP Exercise Program is currently in the third year of field exercises involving local fire, harbor, police, shellfish, and emergency management personnel along with state and federal agencies (Mass Division of Marine Fisheries, U.S. Coast Guard, Mass Environmental Police, NOAA). The exercise design, facilitation, planning, and reporting are funded by MassDEP. Participating towns received grant funding to cover overtime and backfill costs. These exercises are designed to examine the strategies and provide experience to the responders.

Exercise Objectives, Capabilities, and Activities

Capabilities-based planning allows for exercise planning teams to develop exercise objectives and observe exercise outcomes through a framework of specific action items that were derived from the Target Capabilities List (TCL). The capabilities listed below form the foundation for the organization of all objectives and observations in this exercise. Additionally, each capability is linked to several corresponding activities and tasks to provide additional detail.

Based upon the identified exercise objectives below, the exercise planning team has decided to demonstrate the following capabilities during this exercise:

- **Objective 1:**
 - **Planning:**
 - Initial meeting to discuss exercise location, objectives, and structure;
 - Teleconference to designate manpower and equipment
- **Objective 2:**
 - **Communications:**
 - Assign channel (Swansea tactical);
 - Supply radios as needed;
 - Communicate effectively during drill between shoreside/on water responders and IC

- **Objective 3:**
 - **Community Preparedness and Participation:**
 - Simulate incident; assign responders;
 - Develop IAP;
 - Utilize Swansea mobile command post (See Figure 5);
 - Deploy boom;
 - Demobilize boom

Figure 5. Swansea Emergency Mobile Command Center



Scenario Summary

The scenario was a simulated oil spill in Mt. Hope Bay that migrates northwest toward the Coles River. Staff from the Swansea Fire Department, the Somerset Fire Department, Swansea Marine Patrol, and the Somerset Harbormaster Department, Swansea Harbormaster Department were the primary field responders for this deployment exercise. Swansea Emergency Management Agency deployed a mobile command vehicle and developed an Incident Action Plan (IAP). After initial safety and operations briefings, the field responders transported, deployed, demobilized, and stored the boom and anchors used in the exercise (See Figures 6 and 7). Professional spill responders from Moran Environmental and the U.S. Coast Guard provided

assistance and direction to the town responders. Personnel from Nuka Research and MassDEP acted as facilitators, providing direction, answering questions, and keeping the process moving.

Figure 6. Boom in closed chevron array



Figure 7. Rinsing and storing boom in trailer



After the boom was loaded back in the trailer, there was a post-exercise ‘hot wash’, during which participants were asked to share any insights learned during the exercise and/or any suggestions on modifications needed to successfully deploy the tactic. There was a group of observer/evaluators who observed part or all of the exercise and were asked to fill out evaluation forms online, or participate in the debriefing. The observers included representatives from the Coast Guard, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Massachusetts Environmental Police, Dominion Energy, MassDEP, and members of the Somerset and Swansea Fire Departments without specific assignments.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF CAPABILITIES

This section of the report reviews the performance of the exercised capabilities, activities, and tasks. In this section, observations are organized by capability and associated activities. The capabilities linked to the exercise objectives of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay Geographic Response Plan Deployment Exercise are listed below, followed by corresponding activities. Each activity is followed by related observations, which include references, analysis, and recommendations.

CAPABILITY 1: PLANNING

Capability Summary: The Planning capability was exercised during pre-exercise meetings and during the functional exercise. The capability required Fire Chiefs and Deputies from Swansea and Somerset to identify objectives, select an exercise location, design a GRP tactic to be tested, and assign manpower, vessels, and other resources to support the exercise. Effective pre-planning led to a smoothly functioning exercise.

Activity 1.1: Initial Meetings to Discuss Site Selection and Exercise Objectives

Observation 1.1:

Strength: Representatives from both towns worked well together, offering suggestions and weighing the merit of these before accepting or rejecting aforementioned suggestions and providing alternatives.

References: N/A

Analysis: Town-level objectives were well aligned and exercise design proceeded smoothly. It was evident that Swansea and Somerset participate in other joint exercises and operations, which made planning and coordination fairly smooth. Both fire departments committed manpower and vessels to the exercise. There was agreement that the exercise should provide an opportunity for broad participation by as many local responders as possible.

Recommendations: Consider future joint oil spill response exercises, possibly involving other towns or agencies.

Activity 1.2: Teleconference and follow-up meetings to assign manpower and equipment and work through exercise logistics.

Observation 1.2:

Strength: Both towns filled out requisite paperwork for funding to allow appropriate number of key personnel to participate in exercise and agreed to use response trailer from Swansea which had not previously been utilized. Vessels were provided from both towns.

Response crews mixed towns and departments allowing for coordination.

References: N/A

Analysis: Logistical pre-planning led to a smooth exercise. Since the Town of Swansea had not yet deployed boom from their state spill response trailer, the exercise provided an opportunity to utilize the boom in the trailer as well as anchors, lines, and floats. Both towns provided vessels which provided an opportunity to work together in a task force setting with mixed crews from both town fire departments.

Recommendations: Continue to periodically exercise using spill response equipment and mixed crews.

CAPABILITY 2: COMMUNICATIONS

Capability Summary: On-water spill response operations require a common tactical communications capability so that responders from multiple agencies can work together safely and effectively on the water and shoreline, and so that the Incident Command can maintain situational awareness of tactical operations.

Activity 2.1: Assign Communications Channel

Observation 2.1:

Strength: The assignment of Swansea Tactical Marine Channel 3 was made. Responders from Somerset and other agencies were assigned handheld radios by Swansea Fire.

References: N/A

Analysis: Both towns share the practice of minimizing radio “chatter” and confining radio communications to essential information. This practice was evident throughout the exercise, during which Incident Command as well as exercise facilitators monitored radio communications and observed that while the responders communicated key information needed to deploy the boom, they did so in a very streamlined manner. One potential shortcoming was the fact that Swansea and Somerset do not share a tactical channel in their VHF radios. While they could have utilized a common hailing channel for exercise purposes, they chose instead to rely on Swansea’s tactical channel for greater privacy. The Emergency Management Agency mobile command vehicle could also have been used to enhance communications.

Recommendations: Consider future exercises using a common frequency.

Activity 2.2: Supply Radios as Needed

Observation 2.2:

Strength: The Town of Swansea recognized the need for portable radios for Somerset

responders, due to the fact that Tactical Marine Channel 3 was unavailable to them, and provided these to vessels and shoreside responders. A white board was designated to track which radio was being used by each responder.

References: N/A

Analysis: The assignment and tracking of radios for interoperable communications provided a workable solution to address the fact that the two towns do not share tactical frequencies among their VHF radios. There were plenty of handheld radios available to ensure that all crews (vessel and shore) as well as the IC, Safety Officer, and exercise facilitators had radio communications. There was also a communication link to the mobile command vehicle.

Recommendations: None

Activity 2.3: Communicate Effectively During Drill Between On Water/Shoreside Responders and IC.

Observation 2.3:

Strength: Incident Command shared information concisely and clearly between responders on vessels and shoreside. Emergency Management Agency set up mobile Command Center and compiled information into a written IAP format and distributed it.

References: N/A

Analysis: Common operational practices among the two fire departments (minimize unnecessary radio chatter) helped to ensure that radio communications were streamlined and effective. The Swansea Emergency Management Agency added in the element of real-time development of an Incident Action Plan as the exercise progressed. Incident Command and Safety Officer maintained good situational awareness throughout the exercise.

Recommendations: None

CAPABILITY 3: COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND PARTICIPATION

Capability Summary: MassDEP has developed a community-based oil spill response capacity throughout coastal regions of the state by providing oil spill response equipment trailers to local fire departments, developing GRPs (tactical plans to protect sensitive areas from oil spill impacts), and providing initial training to local first responders. This functional exercise provided a key link by allowing first responders from the towns of Swansea and Somerset to work together in a task force setting to exercise their ability to deploy boom from a state spill response trailer during a mock oil spill. The community-based spill response program requires that towns be able to work together, since a major oil spill may require significant mutual aid and assistance. This field exercise provided a realistic scenario for the two towns to work together to

improve their spill response capacity.

Activity 3.1: Simulate Incident; Assign Responders

Observation 3.1:

Strength: Participants from both towns volunteered or were assigned to on-water or shoreside task forces. Task forces were intentionally configured to include participants from different towns and departments to promote inter-jurisdictional cooperation.

References: N/A

Analysis: The process of assigning responders to various task forces provided an opportunity for the departmental leadership to consider the strengths and abilities of their responders for various spill response functions. Responders were assigned either to vessels or to shore teams. The make-up of each team mixed responders from the two towns together to promote interagency coordination. The Swansea Fire Chief acted as Incident Commander, while the Somerset Fire Chief acted as Safety Officer. Both chiefs coordinated their decision-making while maintaining the ICS structure.

Recommendations: None

Activity 3.2: Develop IAP

Observation 3.2:

Strength: With input from Incident Command and the facilitators, a representative from Swansea Emergency Management Agency rapidly drafted an Incident Action Plan and disseminated it to key personnel.

References: N/A

Analysis: The simulated oil spill gave the Swansea Emergency Management Agency an opportunity to work with the first responders to gather information, review, edit and clarify, and create a living document.

Recommendations: None

Activity 3.3: Utilize Swansea Mobile Command Post

Observation 3.3:

Strength: Mobile command post was set up at staging site and Swansea Emergency Management Agency representative used features such as mobile wireless and satellite camera capabilities.

References: N/A

Analysis: Swansea Emergency Management Agency representative coordinated well with Incident Command and Safety Officer to consolidate information and capture it in the IAP. Because of the access to the computer, internet, and satellite, the report was detailed and professional.

Recommendations: None

Activity 3.4: Deploy Boom

Observation 3.4:

Strength: Participants from both towns volunteered or were assigned to task forces. Vessel and shore crews worked well together to implement the booming tactic under challenging environmental conditions.

References: N/A

Analysis: The primary objective of GRPs is to deploy boom ahead of an oil spill to prevent or reduce negative impacts to environmentally sensitive areas. Successful deployment of GRP booming tactics requires that the boom be effectively anchored and positioned so that it would divert, deflect, or exclude oil from the sensitive area. The chevron boom configuration for Coles River was successfully deployed by three vessel crews and three shoreside crews, despite the fact that strong directional winds and a flooding tide made conditions somewhat challenging. Responders showed innovation in handling shoreline anchoring – for example, a piling was used to anchor boom instead of rebar. Vessel-based responders coordinated their activities towing, anchoring, and positioning boom and worked well together throughout.

Recommendations: Conduct future exercises to keep boom deployment skills current.

Activity 3.5: Demobilize Boom

Observation 3.5:

Strength: On water responders towed the boom to the boat ramp where participants who had previously been observing took on the role of rinsing and stowing the boom

References: N/A

Analysis: Demobilization of boom can be time-consuming and tedious. Responders worked well throughout this process, showing strong teamwork.

Recommendations: None

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The GRP deployment exercise at Mt. Hope Bay was held in challenging wind conditions during a flooding tide, yet these conditions did not impede the ability of responders to successfully deploy the boom. The group demonstrated the capability to assign participants to various roles, including Incident Commander, Safety Officer, shore-based and vessel-based task forces, and observers (See Figure 8). Equipment from the Swansea Oil Spill Response trailer was deployed from vessels provided by Swansea and Somerset, and the group became more familiar with deploying, setting, and demobilizing boom, anchors, and floats. The Incident Command communicated effectively and clearly with both vessel-based and shore-based responders, while Emergency Management set up a mobile command post and produced a real-time IAP. Interagency communications were successful, using Swansea Fire's portable VHF radios and tactical channel.

Figure 8. Incident Command and Safety Officer



The exercise was successful on many levels. The GRP closed chevron tactic was deployed as intended, and found to be an effective tactic for diverting oil away from the Coles River. The two towns worked together seamlessly. The boom deployment was accomplished quickly and safely despite challenging wind and current conditions. The staging area worked well and although there were a limited number of vessels available with only moderate horsepower, the responders were able to effectively use these resources to support the deployment.

Lessons learned from this exercise included but were not limited to:

- Responders were able to work well in task force setting that mixed responders from both towns.
- Swansea and Somerset Fire VHF radios do not have a common tactical channel.
- The Swansea mobile command vehicle supported real-time IAP development.
- The proposed booming strategy for Coles River can be effectively implemented with 15-18 kt winds.
- The Ocean Grove boat ramp is a good staging area.

APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This IP has been developed specifically for Massachusetts, Bristol County, as a result of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay Geographic Response Plan Exercise conducted on July 26, 2011. These recommendations draw on both the After Action Report and the After Action Conference.

Table A.1 *Improvement Plan Matrix*

Capability	Observation Title	Recommendation	Corrective Action Description	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Agency	Agency POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Capability 2: Communications	1. Towns would benefit from shared marine tactical channel	2.1 Meet and discuss instituting shared marine tactical channel	2.1.1 Establish shared marine tactical channel	Communications	Swansea and Somerset Fire Depts.	Fire Chiefs	Sept. 1, 2011	Sep 1, 2012
Capability 3: Community Preparedness and Participation	1. Towns would benefit from further deployment exercises	3.1 Seek out opportunities to participate in other oil spill response deployment exercise to continue to gain experience	3.1.1 Volunteer to host another exercise	Community Preparedness and Participation	Swansea and Somerset Fire Depts.	Fire Chiefs	Sept. 1, 2011	Sep 1, 2012

APPENDIX B: SIGN IN SHEET

APPENDIX C: MT. HOPE BAY EVALUATION FORM

GRP Deployment Exercise Evaluation Form		
Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise		Exercise date: 07/26/11
Instructions to Evaluators: Complete this form based on your observations of the GRP exercise. Please turn this form into the facilitators, fax to 240-368-7467 or mail to Nuka Research, PO Box 1672 Plymouth, MA 02362.		
Evaluator Name:		Evaluator Organization:
What was your role in exercise? (responder, observer, facilitator, etc.)		
What was your level of spill response experience prior to this exercise?		
Please check a box to respond to the following.		YES
		NO
1. I feel more prepared to deploy GRPs now than I did prior to this exercise.		
2. I have a better understanding of spill response tactics than I did prior to this exercise.		
3. I would participate in future GRP deployments at other sites.		
4. The objectives were clearly explained and the deployment exercise met the objectives.		
5. The exercise was conducted safely.		
Other comments or suggestions about exercise design & facilitation?		

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise

GRP Deployment Exercise Evaluation Form	
Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise	Exercise date: 07/26/11
Evaluation of Tactics – Closed Chevron Array	
<p>Were responders able to effectively deploy DV tactic using a closed chevron boom configuration (as directed at exercise in-briefing)?</p>	
<p>Describe any challenges or setbacks you encountered or observed in setting the closed chevron.</p>	
<p>Based on your experience today, would you feel comfortable setting a closed chevron boom array during an actual incident?</p>	
Evaluation of Tactics – Open Chevron Array	
<p>If time allowed and tactic DV-alt was deployed, please describe any differences noted in setting the open chevron compared to the closed and your opinion of its effectiveness.</p>	
<p>Please evaluate how well the parking lot at Ocean Grove Drive boat ramp worked for deploying and demobilizing boom from the trailer for this deployment:</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Ideal</u> staging area for boom for this tactic. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Sufficient</u> as a staging area for boom for this tactic. <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Not sufficient</u> as a staging area for boom for this tactic. </p> <p>Elaborate:</p>	

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise

GRP Deployment Exercise Evaluation Form	
Mt. Hope Bay GRP Deployment Exercise	Exercise date: 07/26/11
Evaluation of Deployment Overall	
Was the equipment available (boom, anchors, line, etc.) sufficient to accomplish the deployment? If not, describe.	
Were there enough vessels to deploy the boom? Did vessels have adequate power and maneuverability?	
Did responders appear to have sufficient equipment, training and knowledge to deploy the boom? If no, explain any deficits.	
Did the GRP document (map diagram) provide clear direction as to how and where to deploy the boom? If not, please identify problems & suggest improvements.	

APPENDIX D: TEST CONDITIONS DATA SHEET

APPENDIX E: INCIDENT ACTION PLAN

APPENDIX F: ACRONYMS

Table F.1: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
GRP	Geographic Response Plan
IC	Incident Command
MADEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PFD	Personal Flotation Device
USCG	United States Coast Guard
GRP	Geographic Response Plan