



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

Braintree, Quincy

After-Action Report

June 09, 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 Braintree/Quincy Geographic Response Strategy Exercise
Exercise Date	June 09, 2025
Scope	This full-scale exercise was planned for approximately six hours at the Quincy Fire Department Training Facility. Exercise play was limited to Town River in Quincy, and the surrounding areas.
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 Town River and the adjacent shorelines. The Braintree and Quincy Fire Departments and Police/Harbormasters will utilize 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"> • Quincy Fire Department • Quincy Police/Harbormaster • Braintree Fire Department • 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 configuring a shoreside anchor system



Figure 2: Participants practice connecting sections of boom



Figure 3: Participants learn about sorbent materials, culvert plugs, and heaving lines



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

Photos courtesy of Nuka Research

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exercise Planning

In preparation for the Braintree/Quincy 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 St. Mary's Parish (115 Crescent St, Quincy, MA, 02169) on Wednesday, March 12th, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

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
Kevin O'Connor	Deputy Chief	Quincy Fire Department
Gerry Murphy	Lieutenant	
Riley McGrath	Deputy Harbormaster	Quincy Police Department

Outcomes

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

- **Exercise Date:** Monday, June 9th
- **Classroom Location:** St. Mary's Parish (115 Crescent St, Quincy)
- **Deployment Location(s):** CVS Parking Lot near Town Brook (626 Southern Artery, Quincy)
- **Additional Resources:** N/A
- **Deployment Notes:** Shallow and rocky spots throughout deployment area

Final Planning Meeting

A Final Planning Meeting (FPM) was held via Zoom on Tuesday, May 27, from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM.

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
Kevin O'Connor	Deputy Chief	Quincy Fire Department
Gerry Murphy	Lieutenant	Quincy Police Department
Bob Gillan	Harbormaster	Braintree Fire Department
Bob Leone	Captain	Town River Marina
Shayna Callahan		
Olivia Lafond		
Britany McKibben	CWO	USCG Sector Boston

Outcomes

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

- Deploy and test the 800ft EX01b tactic, as shown in the Town River (BH09) GRS below.

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	16 mph, E
Tidal conditions	Flood tide
Water depth (approx.)	10 ft
Wave action & Current speed (approx.)	Minimal
Vessel traffic	None
Harbor mooring field density	Minimal
Other observations	Shallows surrounding the mouth of Town Brook

The following deployment activities were completed:

- As a last-minute adjustment to initial plans, the Incident Commander decided to deploy a 100ft exclusion tactic at the mouth of Town Brook – with two shoreside anchors. This was due, in part, to shallow waters and underwater rocks surrounding the deployment area - preventing larger vessels from operating near the EX-array.

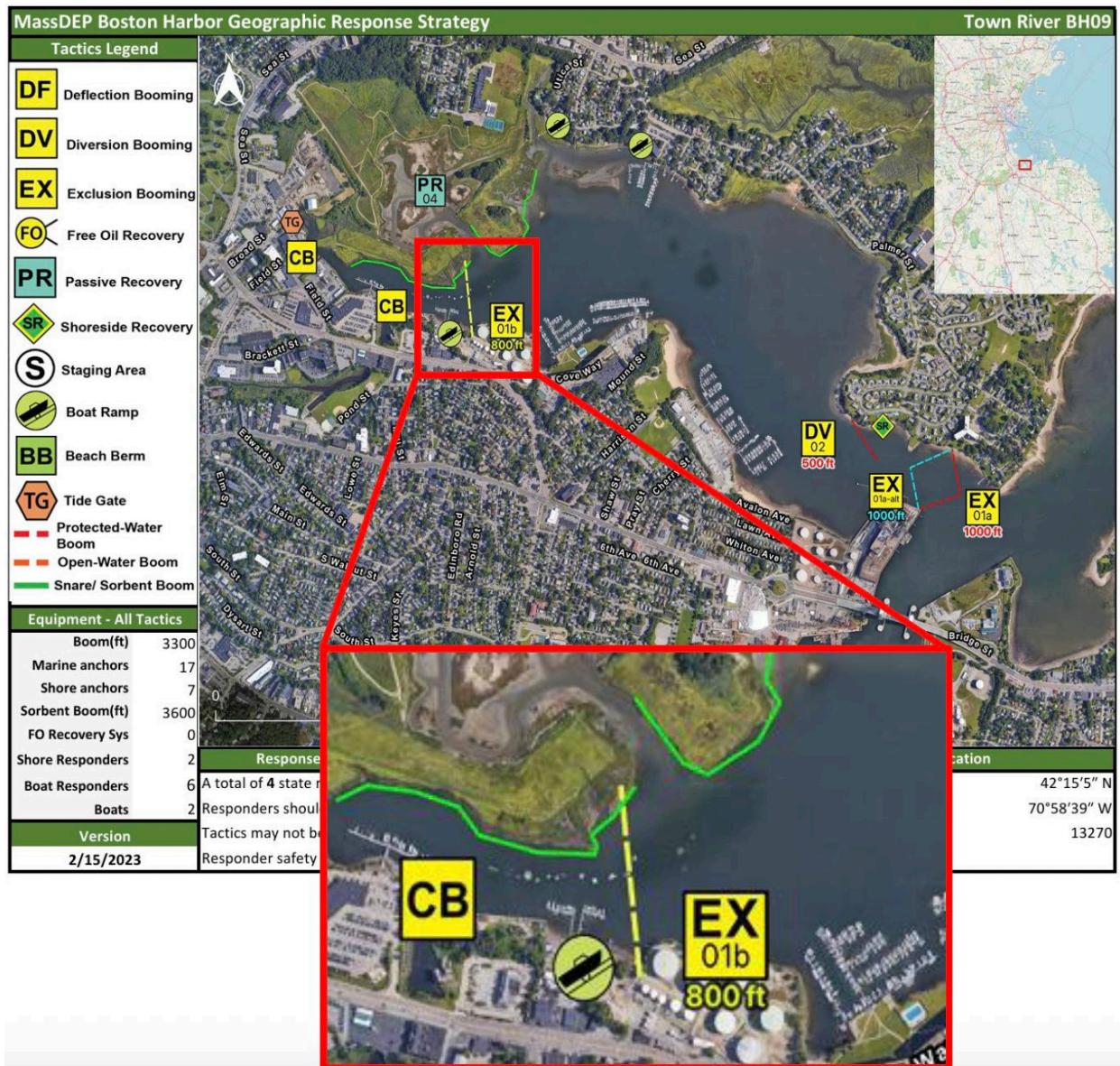


Figure 5: Original GRS Testing Exercise Tactics Map

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 unload 100ft of boom from the response trailer, prepare a shoreside anchor point on either side of Town Brook, then transfer the boom from the shore to an awaiting vessel for configuration of the exclusion tactic.

Strength: Vessel crews towed 100ft of boom from one shoreline and connected the boom to the shoreside anchor on the opposite side of the brook to complete the exclusion configuration. Crews then worked to position the boom with a marine anchor at the apex of the array.

Observation: The amount of boom prepared for the exclusion tactic was insufficient to form a proper shore-to-shore connection, making it challenging to effectively deploy the apex marine anchor.

Analysis: Vessel crews encountered challenges setting the apex anchor for the exclusion array due to having an insufficient amount of boom deployed. This placed additional strain on each of the shoreside anchors, further complicating anchor repositioning and marine anchor deployment efforts. Future deployments would benefit from pre-deployment surveys of the operational area to ensure adequate boom quantities are prepared prior to engaging in on-water operations.

Observation: Due to low water depths throughout the operating area, the larger work vessel was unable to navigate near the deployment location. Due to strong current conditions, the Zodiac did not have enough horsepower to effectively tow more than 100ft of boom.

Analysis: Due to strong currents, the Zodiac lacked the horsepower to tow more than 100ft of boom to the deployment location. To further complicate the operation, the larger work vessel tasked with preparing and dropping the apex marine anchor was unable to properly approach the deployment area due to low water depths. Future training and response efforts should consider vessel capabilities and adjust operational assignments to overcome limiting factors such as current and water depth.



Figure 6: Shoreside crews unload boom to prepare for towing operations



Figure 7: Shoreside crews install a double rebar shoreside anchor

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 Quincy FD Incident Commander (IC) quickly identified a Safety Officer (SO). Together, the IC and SO communicated deployment plans and operational safety considerations through an Operations and Safety briefing.

Observation: Command staff did not assign all personnel with specific roles and responsibilities during the Operations and Safety briefing. Also, the ICS 201 board was not used as a resource during these briefings. These omissions led to moments of confusion amongst personnel and a slowing of the on-water evolution.

Analysis: Because specific personnel assignments were not communicated and the ICS-201 was not utilized as a visual resource during Operations and Safety briefings, some participants encountered difficulties understanding their roles and responsibilities in accomplishing deployment objectives. This impacted the effectiveness of the operation, leading to moments of confusion and forcing Exercise Controllers to step in to provide additional direction and supervision.

Observation: Some responders were observed handling lines under tension near the shoreline and not wearing personal flotation devices (PFDs).

Analysis: Despite Command staff communicating requirements to wear PFDs during the Operations and Safety briefing, several participants were observed not wearing PFDs throughout the operation. Some participants were also observed handling lines with excessive strain while working near the water. This further increased the chances of those individuals suffering snapback injuries, encountering loss of control, and falling into the water. In future operations, the Safety Officer should monitor and reinforce the safety of all operations and the mandatory use of PFDs, even after concluding the Safety briefing.



Figure 8: Crews connect the anchor to a boom anchor point at the chevron's apex



Figure 9: Command Staff facilitate an Operations briefing

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 frequency as the primary radio communications channel and directed participants to join the channel during the Operations and Safety briefings.

Strength: All crews demonstrated fair communication skills, allowing for adjustments to be made.

PARTICIPANTS & RESOURCES

Table 5: List of Participants

Participating Organizations	
Town of Quincy, MA	Participant Count
Quincy Fire Department	12
Quincy Police Department/Harbormasters	3
Town of Braintree, MA	
Braintree Fire Department	7
TOTAL TOWN/CITY PARTICIPANTS	22
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 Sector Boston	4
Other	
Woods Hole Group	2
TOTAL	36

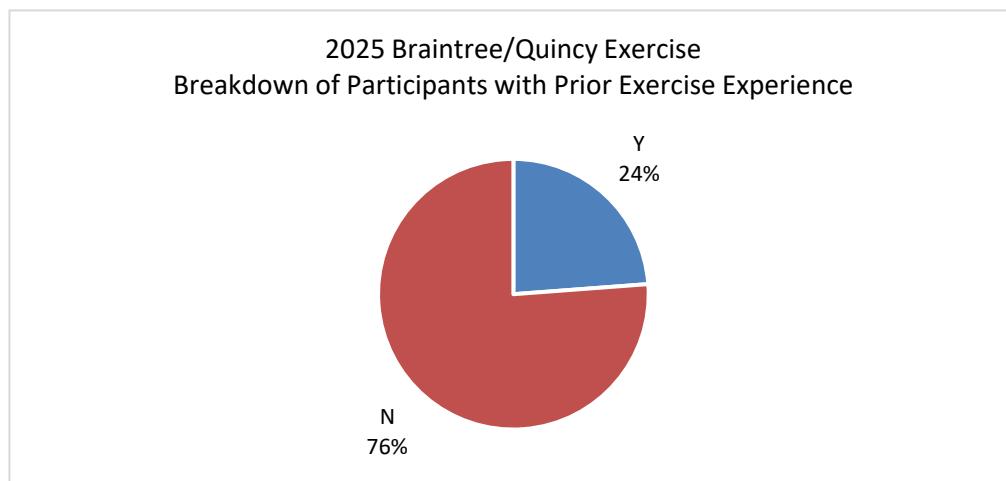


Figure 10: Previous Exercise Participation

Table 6: List of Resources

List of Resources			
Agency	Resource	Kind	Exercise Function
Quincy FD	Zodiac	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Quincy PD/HM	25' Safeboat	Vessel	Boom Deployment
Braintree FD	34' Fire boat	Vessel	Safety
Quincy FD	Oil spill response trailer	Trailer	Deployment
Braintree FD	Oil spill response trailer	Trailer	Trailer training