



Massachusetts Department of
Environmental Protection

Geographic Response Strategy Exercise Series – Fall River/Freetown

After-Action Report/Improvement Plan

September 28, 2021

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) 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.

NOTE: The actual on-water deployment/GRS test was cancelled due to severe weather (heavy rain/lightning) that moved into the area during the exercise. This AAR captures general information related to the classroom and field/hands-on training that was completed prior to termination.

EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	2021 Fall River/Freetown First Responder Exercise
Exercise Dates	September 28, 2021
Scope	This is a full-scale exercise, planned for approximately six hours in Fall River, MA and upon the waters of the Taunton River. Exercise play is limited to the Taunton River in the vicinity of Battleship Cove and the adjacent shoreline.
Focus Area(s)	Prevention, Protection, Response
Capabilities	Environmental Response/Health and Safety, Operational Coordination, Operational Communications.
Objectives	<p>Objective 1: Demonstrate the ability to deploy oil spill equipment from one or more MassDEP pre-positioned oil spill response trailers utilizing common Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) tactics.</p> <p>Objective 2: Demonstrate the ability to assemble a spill response organization utilizing Incident Command System (ICS) principles through execution of an Incident Briefing (ICS 201) and implementation of on-site incident management and tactical operations.</p> <p>Objective 3: Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate between multiple local, state, and federal agencies including fire departments, police departments, harbor masters, and other state and federal first responders using VHF and UHF communications.</p>
Threat or Hazard	Discharge of oil into a navigable waterway
Scenario	An oil spill has occurred that threatens the Taunton River. The Fall River and Freetown Fire Departments and the Fall River Harbor Master will utilize the Fall River Waterfront GRS (MHB-05) to protect sensitive resources in Battleship Cove and the surrounding area.
Sponsor	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Participating Organizations	<p>Participating organizations will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall River Fire Department • Fall River Harbor Master • Freetown Fire Department • MassDEP • U.S. Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England • Moran Environmental Recovery (MER) • Nuka Research <p>Note: See Appendix B for participant count</p>
Point of Contact	<p>Julie Hutcheson, Marine Oil Spill Program Coordinator Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program 1 Winter St. Boston, MA 02108 (617) 366-7424 julie.hutcheson@mass.gov</p>

John Duponte (MER) provides an overview of MassDEP oil spill response trailer equipment



First Responders learn how to and practice throwing a heaving line for use in shore to vessel line and equipment transfer



First responders learn how to set-up a shoreside anchor point



Photos courtesy of Nuka Research

ANALYSIS OF CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned capabilities, and performance ratings for each capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
Demonstrate the ability to deploy oil spill equipment from one or more MassDEP pre-positioned oil spill response trailers utilizing common Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) tactics.	Environmental Response/Health and Safety				U
Demonstrate the ability to assemble a spill response organization utilizing Incident Command System (ICS) principles through execution of an Incident Briefing (ICS 201) and implementation of on-site incident management and tactical operations.	Operational Coordination				U
Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate between multiple local, state, and federal agencies including fire, police and harbormaster departments using VHF and UHF communications	Operational Communications				U
<p>Ratings Definitions:</p> <p>Performed without Challenges (P): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.</p> <p>Performed with Some Challenges (S): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.</p> <p>Performed with Major Challenges (M): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.</p> <p>Unable to be Performed (U): The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).</p>					

Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance

Core Capability	Organizational Capability Target	Associated Critical Tasks	Exercise Observations
Environmental Response/ Health and Safety	Overview of Response Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Mass DEP Trailer • Identify boom and sorbents • Connect boom together • Connect towing bridle to boom • Connect components of anchor system together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were attentive during the classroom session, asking questions and providing feedback and were fully engaged and participatory in the hands-on equipment training.

Table 2. Summary of Organizational Capability Targets and Associated Critical Tasks

As indicated on the cover page, the on-water equipment deployment was cancelled due to severe weather moving into the area after the classroom and hands-on equipment training sessions were complete so a comprehensive evaluation of each exercise objective and associated capability could not be performed. Therefore, no further performance overview can be provided.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS & RESOURCES

Participating Organizations	
City of Fall River, MA	Participant Count
Fall River Fire Department	18
Fall River Harbormaster	1
Town of Freetown, MA	
Freetown Fire Department	3
TOWN PARTICIPANTS	22
Federal	
United States Coast Guard Sector Southeastern New England	2
State	
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)	2
Nuka Research and Planning Group, LLC (contractor for MassDEP)	3
Moran Environmental Recovery (contractor for MassDEP)	3
TOTAL	32

Agency	Resource	Kind	Exercise Function
Fall River Fire Department	M/V ADAM CHIPSTRONG II - Munson Packman Landing Craft - 34'	Vessel	Boom deployment
Fall River Fire Department	Engine 2 - Pump Truck	Vehicle	Exercise support - equipment washdown
Fall River Fire Department	Oil Spill Response Trailer	Equipment	Boom Deployment
Fall River Harbormaster	SAFE boat - 25'/ 550HP	Vessel	Boom deployment
Freetown Fire Department	Oil Spill Response Trailer	Equipment	Equipment Demo/Hands-on Training
MER	Parker - 25'/ 250HP	Vessel	Observation/Safety