



Office of Spill Prevention and Response

Office of Spill Prevention and Response Overview

- The Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) is the lead state agency for prevention, preparedness, response, and natural resource restoration related to oil spills in state surface waters. The Administrator of OSPR is a Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).
- California's Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Act of 1990 created OSPR, establishing oil spill readiness and response guidelines in the wake of the devastating Exxon Valdez incident of 1989, and the American Trader spill in Huntington Beach a year later. In 2014, Governor Jerry Brown and the Legislature expanded the program from the marine waters to cover all state surface waters.
- OSPR is one of only a few agencies in the nation with authority over major pollution events, and also public trustee responsibilities for fish, wildlife and plants giving it a unique role in prevention and response to spills but then also the follow through with restoration activities.
- When a significant spill occurs, OSPR deploys a field response team of wardens, environmental scientists and oil spill prevention specialists to evaluate the incident and direct response efforts. OSPR uses a standardized emergency management system commonly referred to as the Incident Command System (ICS). Such a structure incorporates personnel from OSPR and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) during marine spills and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during inland oil-related incidents.
- When there is not an ongoing incident, OSPR collaborates with a multitude of organizations to develop contingency plans and geographic response plans, each geared toward maximizing resource protection in the event of a spill. Harbor Safety Committees and Port Area Committees (jointly led by OSPR and USCG) meet regularly at the state's busiest ports to collect feedback from environmental groups, city/state/federal government, and the private industry to improve safety and practices within the ports. OSPR regularly reviews and streamlines regulations, strives to improve response resources and abilities, works with local government to build partnerships, and leverages training opportunities to ensure California reaches the best achievable protection it can.
- OSPR also conducts drills and exercises (some unannounced), in an effort to promote readiness in the event of a spill. Participants include OSPR staff, as well as representatives from the oil industry including vessels and facilities. OSPR also ensures that industry members with the potential to have a spill also have the financial resources to cover the costs of a response.
- The agency also operates several research laboratories that employ state-of-the-art technology used to determine oil sources, and partners with the UC Davis Wildlife Care Center to manage the Oiled Wildlife Care Network.

Key Responsibilities of OSPR

- Ensure vessels and facilities demonstrate financial responsibility in case of a spill
- Ensure vessels and facilities have an Oil Spill Contingency Plan
- Monitor oil transfers over waters of the state, especially bunkering (vessels taking on oil) and lightering (vessels offloading oil) in marine waters
- Oversee tug escorts for oil tank vessels coming into California ports
- Oversee and give ratings to Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs)
- Plan and participate in drills and exercises for Contingency Plan Holders and OSROs
- License of Oil Spill Cleanup Agents for use in California Waters
- Oversee the Oiled Wildlife Care Network and its advisory board
- Establish the five Harbor Safety Committees
- Work with US Coast Guard to develop Area Contingency Plans and with the US Environmental Protection Agency to develop Geographic Response Plans with assistance from local governments and OSROs
- Maintain an enforcement program that investigates oil spills and other hazardous material incidents
- Manage oil spill response in coordination with local, state and federal agencies
- Conduct Natural Resource Damage Assessments
- Develop and monitor restoration projects
- Administer the Oil Spill Prevention and Administration Fund
- Administer the Oil Spill Response Trust Fund
- Provide funding for oil spill and spill response technology research
- Provides grants for environmental enhancement programs, local response equipment, and local government contingency planning
- Identify sensitive sites and habitats and develop protection strategies, then test those strategies for effectiveness
- Manage specialized laboratories including the Petroleum Chemical Laboratory, Aquatic Bioassessment Laboratory, Water Pollution Control Laboratory, and the Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory Group

For more information on OSPR and its programs, go to: www.wildlife.ca.gov/ospr