



Office of Spill Prevention and Response

Overview of the Office of Spill Prevention & Response

The Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR), is a division of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the lead state agency for marine and off-highway oil spill prevention, response and natural resource restoration.

California's Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Act of 1990 established oil spill readiness and response guidelines in wake of the devastating Exxon Valdez incident of 1989 and the closer-to-home American Trader spill in Huntington Beach a year later. It also established OSPR which opened in 1991.

What makes OSPR unique is that it is both a response and prevention organization. It is one of only a few agencies in the nation with authority over major pollution events and public trustee responsibilities for the state's fish, wildlife and plants.

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. The agency uses a standardized emergency management system commonly referred to as the Incident Command System (ICS). Such a structure incorporates personnel from the U.S. Coast Guard during marine spills and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during inland oil-related incidents, as well as other state and local government representatives.

When there is not an ongoing incident, OSPR collaborates with a multitude of organizations to develop oil spill contingency 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 the U.S. Coast Guard) meet regularly at the state's busiest ports to collect feedback from environmental groups, city/state/federal government, labor organizations and the private industry to improve safety and practices within the ports.

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 and local governments.

The agency also operates several research laboratories that employ state-of-the-art technology used to determine oil sources, evaluate water pollution and toxicology. See [OSPR labs page](#).

The agency also operates the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center (MWVCRC) that provides a state-of-the-art facility, equipment, and trained personnel that provides the best achievable capture, care, and rehabilitation of marine wildlife (primarily sea otters, marine birds, and pinnipeds) affected by oil spills and/or other pollution events. In addition to the cleaning and rehabilitation facility, the MWVCRC maintains mobile veterinary labs, several boats, and other equipment for the capture and care of marine wildlife. See fact sheet on the [Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center](#).

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 or near marine waters
- Oversee tug escorts for oil tank vessels coming into California ports
- Oversee and rate Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs)
- Plan and participate in drills and exercises for Contingency Plan Holders and OSROs
- Plan and participate in US Coast Guard (USCG) National Pollution Response Exercise Programs
- License of Oil Spill Cleanup Agents for use in California Waters
- Oversight of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network and its advisory board
- Lead the five Harbor Safety Committees
- Work with USCG to develop Area Contingency 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
- Identify sensitive sites and habitats in the coastal areas and develop protection strategies