



# **SURFRIDER FOUNDATION**

## **OIL SPILL TOOLKIT**

Oil spills have devastating effects on marine and coastal environments. This toolkit is an informational resource and a reference tool to be used by Surfrider Chapters and members in responding to oil spill disasters. The Surfrider Foundation is committed to activism and outreach to protect and enjoy our coasts in a responsible manner, and we strongly encourage our members to abide by the appropriate channels outlined in this manual when responding to an emergency. Members should apply pressure on authorities to carry out an immediate and effective response to an oil spill but should never commence cleanup efforts on their own or encourage others to do so. Potential volunteers should acquire any required training before undertaking any cleanup operations and cooperate with local cleanup efforts.

### **Being Prepared for a Spill**

1. Determine which government agency should be involved in a spill response: The first point of contact should always be the National Response Center's 24 hour emergency hotline at either (800) 424-8802 or (202) 267-2675. In addition, you should determine the local agency responsible for the cleanup effort before a spill occurs and be sure to have their contact information easily accessible in case of an emergency. See the "Reporting" section of this handbook for more information.
2. Obtain any required training: Volunteering to assist in oil spill cleanup efforts requires special training that must be obtained in advance. See the "Volunteering" section of this handbook for more information.
3. Determine where to volunteer: Federal and state agencies often utilize volunteers to assist in cleanup and remediation efforts. Similarly, non-profit organizations specializing in oil spill disasters often accept and train volunteers to help clean oiled wildlife after a spill.
4. Designate an Oil Spill Coordinator: Each group should consider designating an Oil Spill Coordinator to oversee the response effort and ensure maximum coordination among government and volunteer organizations. In the event of an oil spill emergency, the oil spill coordinator should:
  - (a) Immediately notify the U.S. Coast Guard and any local agencies of the spill;
  - (b) Serve as the main contact point for Surfrider headquarters about potential state-sponsored volunteer opportunities;
  - (c) Notify Chapter members of state-sponsored volunteer efforts and remind volunteers to assist according to the policies outlined in this manual; and
  - (d) Serve as the main contact point for volunteers regarding the

response effort.

### **If A Spill Occurs: Reporting**

Any actual or suspected spill should immediately be reported to the **National Response Center** (“NRC”), the federal government’s emergency response center for reporting oil and chemical spills.

### **The NRC maintains a 24-hour emergency hotline staffed by Coast Guard personnel at either (800) 424-8802 or (202) 267-2675.**

In addition to the federal government’s emergency hotline, most states have established local emergency response systems. Before calling to report spill information, you should be prepared to answer as many of the following questions as possible: 1. Your contact information; 2. The location of the spill and the type of habitat impacted or threatened; 3. The date and time of the spill; 4. The substance that you think was spilled (oil, gas, diesel, etc.); 5. The estimated size of the spill, as well as the potential spill volume; 6. Any reports of observed or threatened injury to wildlife; 7. Whether you have any information about who caused the spill; 8. What actions have already been initiated to control and clean up the spill; 9. The environmental conditions at the spill site.

Photographs and accurate reports of oiled wildlife sightings and statistics may be extremely helpful in clean-up and rehabilitation efforts. If you are able to take any photos of oiled wildlife or oil on the beach, it is essential that you stay off the beach, keep a safe distance from any distressed wildlife, and stay clear of any emergency personnel or Hazmat crews. Walking in a potentially contaminated area is not only dangerous, but may also result in cross-contamination and may ultimately cause greater damage to the environment. If you are able to take photos from a safe distance, be sure to note the exact location and time of the picture.

### **If A Spill Occurs: Volunteering**

Volunteering for state or local governments to help clean oiled beaches and wildlife in an oil spill crisis provides great benefits to response agencies that may be operating with limited resources. However, these opportunities are not always available immediately and volunteering to assist in oil spill cleanup efforts requires special training that must be obtained in advance. Untrained activists should never clean up or otherwise come into contact with oil or other hazardous substances, and volunteers should never undertake a cleanup effort without the direction and supervision of state or local authorities.

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”) regulations **require 24 hours of Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standard (HAZWOPER) training for volunteers involved in emergency response oil spill and containment operations.** The emergency response phase generally encompasses the period in which oil is initially washed on the beach. Once the oil stops spreading and has stabilized, operations will generally be considered post-emergency response. An annual 8-hour refresher course is required to maintain this certification.

Volunteers may participate in post-emergency response operations that pose a low magnitude of risk (such as shoreline cleanup) provided that they attend a reduced 4-hour training course. Post emergency response operations take place “after the immediate threat of a release has been stabilized or eliminated and clean-up of the site has begun.” OSHA Dir. CPL § 02-02-051. This condensed course allows volunteers to participate in beach cleanup efforts where exposure to hazardous materials is within a permissible limit and health risks from skin absorption are minimal.

If you have an interest in volunteering to help in oil spill cleanup operations, the post-emergency training course is generally sufficient for participating in beach cleanups. Organizations like the Coast Guard, fire departments, state environmental conservation offices, fish and game units, and local community response associations often provide these trainings at no cost.

**Contacts:**

**National Response Center** (800) 424-8802 (24 hours)

**California**

**West Coast Oil Spill Hotline**

(800) OILS-911 or (800) 852-7550 (24 hours)

**Department of Fish and Game Hotline**

(888) DFG-CALTIP (24 hours)

Florida - **Division of Emergency Management State Warning Point** (800) 320-0519 or (850) 413-9911 (24 hours)

Georgia - **Environmental Protection Division Emergency Hotline** (800) 241-4113 or (404) 656-4863 (24 hours)

Texas - **General Land Office Oil Spill Reporting Hotline:** (800) 832-8224 (24 hours)

## **APPENDIX - Additional Background Information**

Oil spills have devastating effects on marine and coastal environments. Soft sediment shores that are sheltered from waves (such as estuaries) are highly productive ecosystems, and oil may penetrate fine sediments and result in permanent harm to crucial marine habitats. In tropical regions, oil may penetrate mangrove swamps and smother the roots of mangrove trees that provide important habitats to many species of fish and mammals.

Oil spills also result in catastrophic effects on marine and coastal life. Seabirds are especially vulnerable because they congregate on the surface of the water and are likely to come into contact with floating oil. Oil penetrates the plumage of birds, which impairs their ability to fly, reduces their ability insulate against cold, and makes them less buoyant in the water. Oiled birds also typically attempt to preen, causing them to ingest the oil coating their feathers. This oil results in kidney damage and altered liver functions, leading to dehydration, metabolic imbalances and ultimately death.

Marine mammals that breed along the shoreline are similarly affected. Marine mammals that rely on fur to regulate their body temperature, such as seals and sea otters, are particularly vulnerable. Oil reduces insulation, leading to large fluctuations in body temperature that cause either hypothermia or overheating. Marine mammals that rely on fat stores to stay warm (such as seals, dolphins, and whales) may ingest oil, leading to dehydration, respiratory difficulties, digestive damage, and often death.

### **Federal Legislation**

#### **Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (33 U.S.C. § 2701-61)**

In the wake of the Exxon Valdez spill, Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act in order to strengthen the EPA's ability to prevent and respond to catastrophic oil spills. Currently, the Act is the primary federal statute governing oil spills in U.S. waters. The Act establishes liability for oil spills and requires oil storage facilities and vessels to submit plans to the Federal government describing how they will respond to large oil discharges. The Act also establishes a fund financed by an oil tax to clean up spills and compensate for damages resulting from such spills. Finally, the Act mandates a National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan to prepare and plan for effective responses to oil spills and the discharge of other hazardous materials on a regional scale.

### **California Legislation**

#### **Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act**

In response to the disastrous 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, the California Legislature enacted the Lempert-Keene-Seastrand Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act. The Act covers all aspects of marine oil spill prevention and response in California. Most importantly, the Act established the Office of Spill Prevention and Response ("OSPR") within the Department of Fish and Game as the lead state agency responsible for oil spill prevention and response in California. The act delegates

substantial authority to the OSPR to direct oil spill prevention, response, cleanup activities, and habitat restoration. This authority includes the ability to conduct appropriate studies and incorporate relevant findings within the oil spill prevention and response programs throughout California. The Act also required OSPR to establish rescue and rehabilitation stations for aquatic birds and wildlife. In 1993, the California Legislature amended the Act to provide funding to support this directive. SB 775 directed OSPR to use the interest accrued from California's Oil Spill Response Trust Fund to build rehabilitation centers for oiled wildlife. This network of wildlife care organizations is specially designed to respond to oil spills along the California coast.

Since the passage of the Act, OSPR has developed both proactive and corrective oil spill prevention and response programs. In 1993, OSPR created California's Oil Spill Contingency Plan, which describes spill response roles and defines OSPR's relationships with other agencies. In 1995, the OSPR published the Coastal Protection Review, which outlines California's oil spill readiness by describing California's existing protection measures