

Marine Oil Spill Prevention

Background

DEQ's marine oil spill prevention program allows the state to prevent and respond to oil spills in Oregon's waters. Such spills pose a major threat to Oregon's waters, air, land and wildlife.

Environmental damages from oil spills could be significant. If a spill were to occur in the Columbia River, for example, rapid currents and the tidal flux of Oregon's estuaries would cause oil to spread rapidly if not quickly contained. A wide variety of sensitive aquatic life and waterfowl, plus large areas of fragile habitats, could be seriously harmed.

Fees

Fees levied on facilities and vessel trips provide monies to operate the marine oil spill program. Anticipated fee revenue per biennium is about \$800,000. The Oregon Legislature established these fees in 1991, revising them in 2007 to these levels:

Cargo Vessels per trip	\$70
Tank Barge per trip	
<25,000 bbls (barrels)	\$60
>25,000 bbls - <99,000 bbls	\$70
>100,000 bbls	\$100
Dredges (per day)	\$36
Tank Vessel per trip	\$1,200
Facility (annual)	\$5,900

Oil spills

The great majority of spills involve petroleum products. While some spills are of cargo, many others are of a vessel's own fuel. Oil spills to surface water can result from causes as varied as collisions, equipment failure, overfilling of vessel or facility tanks, pumping bilge water contaminated with oil, and other operator errors.

A spill of a few hundred gallons of oil in a river is a serious matter and can affect not only the environment but also commerce. A sufficiently large spill could result in shipping lane restrictions in order to avoid contamination and allow emergency responders to contain the oil.

Vessel traffic

The areas most traveled and therefore most likely to be affected by a spill are: the Oregon coast, Columbia River, and Willamette River from its confluence with the Columbia in Portland upstream to Oregon City.

Preventing and preparing for spills

Spill prevention and preparedness is an essential part of the program. Preparedness tools include geographic response plans, drills and exercises, and vessel and facility plans.

Geographic response plans

Geographic response plans detail geographic information, equipment requirements and locations, as well as preferred response activities for particular sections of the Willamette and Columbia rivers and coast. Each plan focuses on a specific river segment and includes identification of aquatic and wildlife habitats and water withdrawal points and uses, resource protection and spill containment strategies, maps, locations of necessary materials, and other information. Government agencies, river users and response providers collaborate to develop these plans.

Drills and exercises

DEQ regularly requires participation in and attends response and cleanup exercises as an observer or active participant. Incident management teams, emergency responders and DEQ staff all gain valuable training and insights from drills and exercises as well as actual incidents.

Vessel and facility plans

Vessels traveling through navigable waters in Oregon including the Columbia and Willamette rivers and oil handling facilities located in these areas must have oil spill response plans. These plans provide clear instructions for responding to oil spills. DEQ reviews and approves each of the plans.



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