

Canadian Readiness and Response to Oil Spills from Vessels
*Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Annual Meeting and
Conference*

Niagara Falls, Ontario, June 2011



Scott Vaughan,
Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
Jim McKenzie,
Principal
Office of the Auditor General

Our Mandate

- Examine government of Canada environmental protection and sustainability programs and report to Parliament of Canada
- Provide independent, objective and evidence-based reports, to enable Parliament to hold the government to account



What We Examined?



- December 2010 -- *Oil Spills from Ships*
- Examined spill preparedness and response from all types of spills, including oil and other spills (including hazardous and noxious substances)
- Examined the federal regime in Canada, comprised of the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada and Environment Canada
- Did not examine prevention and detection

Why It Matters

- Spills can have an immediate and long-term impacts -- marine life, economic viability from jobs to tourism



Why It Matters



- In Canadian waters, spills are not a rare event:
- 2007-2009 -- over 4,160 pollution incidents reported to the Canadian Coast Guard
 - Of these, 1,580 involved oil spills from ships.
 - 25 percent of total reported spills were reported in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence regions
 - According to data from the Canadian Coast Guard, approximately one third of the total reported incidents involved a spill response using regional resources
 - Hard to know exactly the significance of spills due to poor data

Who Does What – the Federal Regime

- After the 1989 Exxon Valdez, the federal government began and review and adopted a new regime 1995
- Need to know who has the lead in an emergency
- Federal regime consists of Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Environment Canada
- Response Organizations



Response Agreements



Response time requirements for certified response organizations

Quantity of oil spill	Response time requirements
150 tonnes	6 hours (for equipment to be deployed on-site)
1,000 tonnes	12 hours (for equipment to be deployed on-site)
2,500 tonnes	18 hours (for equipment to be on-site)
10,000 tonnes	72 hours (for equipment to be on-site)

Policy question raised by Parliamentarians: are response times sufficient given potential impacts (especially for large spills)?

What We Found – Emergency Planning and Risk Assessment



- First, not all emergency response plans are up-to-date:
 - The national plan for the Canadian Coast Guard done in 1998; Environment Canada's -- 1999.
 - Need plans that are up-to-date and supported by equipment, training and exercises.
 - Some regional plans more up-to-date than others. Central and Arctic Region – covering Great Lakes – updated in 2008; Quebec Region updated in 2009

What We Found – Emergency Planning and Risk Assessment



- Second: knowing and responding to risks
 - The federal regime lacks a systematic approach to assess risks – the last national risk assessment was done in 2000.
 - Risks evaluated off south coast of Newfoundland, which is a high volume area for tankers

What We Found – Oil Spill Response Equipment

- The Canadian Coast Guard has found through its own internal assessments that much of its emergency response equipment is out-of-date
- Old is not necessarily bad -- but -- need system to maintain equipment – internal evaluation raises doubts that this is working



What We Found – Oil Spill Response Equipment



- Positive Steps: Some new approaches and procurement
 - New pollution response barges
 - New emergency response equipment in the North combined with rapid deployment plans.
 - New funding does not however cover costs for operations and maintenance which puts pressure on existing resources.
 - Set up training with local communities in the North.

What We Found

– Training and Exercises



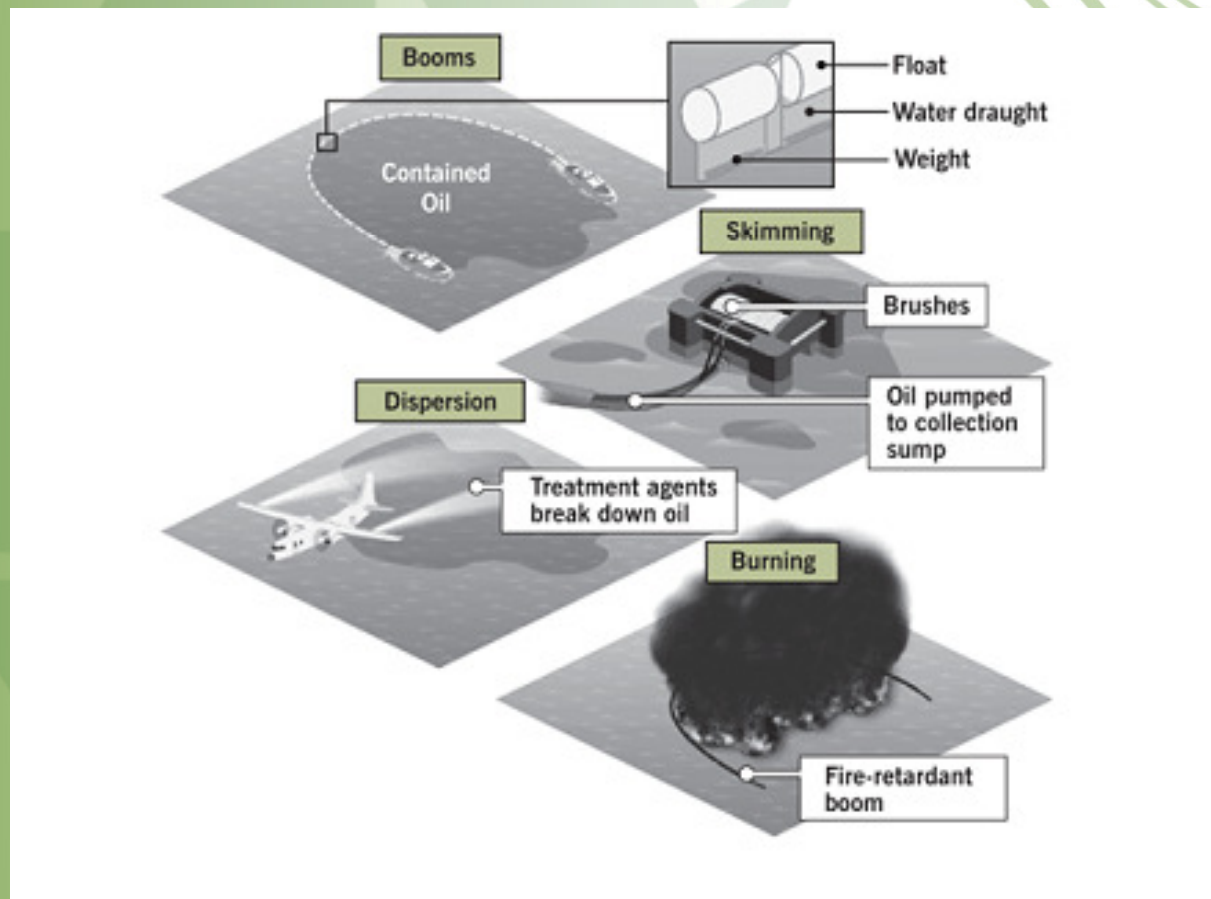
- No national training program for oil spill response.
- Instead, each region has their own training.
- Limited national exercises. Recent table-top exercise for a major oil spill of national significance identified gaps.
- Cooperation and joint exercises between the Canadian and US Coast Guards, for instance in the Great Lakes (CANUSLAK).
- But no inter-regional exercises within Canada, for example between the Atlantic and Quebec region. If a major spill occurred within Canada, lack of training and exercises between regions could have an impact

What We Found

– Training and Exercises



Exhibit 1.4—Responders need to be familiar with the many techniques used to contain oil spills



Finally, Hazardous and Noxious Substances



- High, and increasing volume of HNS shipments raises risk of major chemical spill in Canadian waters
- Windsor, Hamilton and Montreal identified as high-risk ports
- At the international level, the International Maritime Organization has a protocol to address the treatment of ship source chemical spills
- Protocol requires calls for a national response system, including a designated national authority, a national contingency plan, response equipment, communications plans, and regular training and exercises
- Canada has not adopted the Protocol, and will have no regime in place until 2013.
- In the interim, Canada lacks a formal framework for responding to ship-source chemical spills including clear roles and responsibilities.

Sum Up

- Update emergency response plans, and put them in practice through exercises
- Update risk assessments, to understand changing risks
- Training is important for readiness
- Regime for dealing with HNS incidents still outstanding

