PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

EPA NEW ENGLAND INCREASES OUR PREPAREDNESS

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency New England

Introduction

Long after many response agencies have packed up their equipment and moved on, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is often required to remain at a disaster or environmental incident for the long-haul – to complete clean-up and decontamination activities. No matter what type of environmental emergency or homeland security incident we anticipate, whether its chemical, biological, radiological, oil spills, or natural disasters clean-up and decontamination are important elements of the response – and EPA plays a key role to ensure public health and safety.

We have seen the increasing importance of EPA's role in federal response efforts as we recount the major disasters of the recent past. EPA worked with State and City officials to conduct air monitoring, clean-up and decontamination through lower Manhattan after 9/11; EPA developed and oversaw the state-of-the-art decontamination procedures which re-opened federal office buildings after the Anthrax attacks; the Agency assisted in the search and recovery of hazardous materials and debris after the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster; and the Agency deployed more than 1600 of its personnel to clean-up environmental hazards and debris and restore critical water services after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

EPA's involvement and participation in these significant national responses have prompted the Agency to heed some valuable lessons to step up its homeland security planning efforts. One of the most important lessons that changed the way we think about, and plan for emergencies, is to fully incorporate homeland security and emergency preparedness into all aspects of EPA's operations and planning. Additionally, we are working to ensure that all employees are aware of EPA's important and growing role to help out in the wake of a major disaster or emergency.

In EPA New England, we have addressed these lessons head-on. Notwithstanding the critical work done by EPA New England's Emergency Planning and Response Branch, which continues to play a central role in our homeland security planning efforts, the Region has worked to integrate emergency response planning into all regional program offices and has even mandated Incident Command System and homeland security training for all staff. As EPA New England plans for the future, we must be ready for all types of emergencies. This publication tells you what we have done to respond and how we are preparing for the future. It highlights our key efforts as we continue to get ready for whatever the future holds.

The Emergency Planning and Response Branch

Regional Assets and Activities

EPA New England's Emergency Planning and Response Branch is the hub of regional first response activities. EPA's emergency responders, called On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs), are on call 24-hours a day, every day of the year, and are trained to respond to oil spills, chemical releases, and terrorist incidents. In a typical year, the Branch evaluates over 800 notifications of oil or chemical spills; conducts field response to about 25 emergency incidents; and conducts longer-term clean-up activities at approximately 25 sites that pose time-critical threats.

At work in the Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC).

Dedicated EPA Emergency Response Vehicles and Mobile Supplied-Air Trailer

EPA's On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) may supply resources and technical expertise to help with a clean-up led by a State or local Agency, or they may lead the clean-ups for more significant incidents. The OSCs coordinate the agency's emergency work and are responsible for sending personnel and equipment to national or regional releases or spills; responding to emergencies resulting from inland oil spills and chemical releases; overseeing and/or managing the clean-up of hazardous waste sites; and, inspecting oil storage facilities. Currently, EPA New England has 24 OSCs who coordinate federal efforts with local and state emergency personnel.

The EPA Mobile Command Post (MCP) can be deployed at a moments notice to the field, to the site of an incident, or even to support personnel during field exercises.

During an emergency, EPA's first priority is to protect human health and the environment.

Exterior: Mobile Command Post (MCP).

Interior: At work in the MCP.

To accomplish their mission, EPA New England OSCs have access to dedicated contractor support: 1) the Superfund Technical Assistance and Response Team (START) contractor provides real-time air monitoring, sampling, mobile laboratory, and other technical assistance; and 2) the Emergency Rapid Response Services (ERRS) contractor provides personnel and equipment to conduct environmental clean-up activities.

For large or complex responses, EPA New England also has the ability to supplement its own response capabilities by requesting/accessing national support (personnel and/or equipment) from the other nine regional offices as well as from Headquarters and EPA Special Teams: the Environmental Response Team (ERT); the Radiological Emergency Response Team (RERT); the National Counter-Terrorism Evidence Response Teams (NCERT); the National Decontamination Team (NDT); and the regional EPA Criminal Investigation Division (CID)

EPA New England's Emergency Planning and Response Branch coordinates its operations through the Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC), which is located within EPA's Offices in downtown Boston. The REOC is the primary location for performing command and control activities and for providing reach-back support to EPA personnel deployed in the field.

EPA's 24-Hour Spill Number: 617-723-8928

Equipment and Technologies

EPA New England OSCs have access to dedicated response vehicles and specialized response and communication equipment. This includes: the New England Regional Laboratory and a mobile laboratory; personal protective equipment (e.g., protective suits, self-contained breathing systems, respirators, specialized gloves, etc.); chemical and radiation detectors; air monitoring equipment; sampling materials; a mobile air trailer; data collection devices; decontamination shelters and equipment; a command shelter; and global positioning systems.

Level A Training: Personnel Decontamination.

The Emergency Response Branch also has a dedicated Mobile Command Post (MCP). This 35-foot vehicle serves as a field command platform that lets OSCs communicate with personnel on- and off-site as well as with local officials, the media and the public. The MCP is a highly sophisticated mobile unit with specialized communications equipment. The MCP provides responders with a safe and climate controlled work space during a response. It can be deployed at a moments notice to the field, to the site of an incident, or even to support personnel during field exercises.

The Mobile Command Post has:

- cellular and satellite phones
- secure computer network through satellite connections to EPA and the internet
- color printer and fax machine
- two satellite television monitors
- roof-mounted video camera with capabilities to uplink to the web
- VHF and UHF radios
- weather station

Since 2005, the MCP has been deployed numerous times, including: to response operations at a large mill fire in Plainfield, Connecticut (InterRoyal Mill Fire); national response operations in Louisiana during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; and after a massive chemical plant explosion in Danvers, Massachusetts.

Emergency Response Coordination

The National Contingency Plan

The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, more commonly called the National Contingency Plan (NCP), is the federal government's plan for responding to both oil spills and releases of hazardous substance (including radioactive materials). The NCP is at the heart of the National Response System, under which federal departments and agencies help state and local officials protect public health and the environment during hazardous materials emergencies. The intent of the NCP is to develop a national response capability and promote overall coordination among the hierarchy of emergency response.

Regional Emergency Response Sites in the Spotlight

Danbury, CT Anthrax:

EPA New England joined federal, state and local responders at an emergency in September 2007 in Danbury, Connecticut involving a family's exposure to naturally-occurring anthrax. The anthrax exposures were the result of contact from contaminated animal hides that had been imported from Africa to make drum heads. Local fire personnel, the state, and several federal agencies responded to the scene to find the source and extent of contamination. This effort involved the Connecticut Departments of Environmental Protection and Public Health, the US Center for Disease Control, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, as well as EPA's National Decontamination Team (NDT). A shed on the property and house were found to be contaminated with anthrax spores. EPA decontaminated these structures through a combination of washing with bleach and whole-house fumigation with chlorine dioxide. The clean-up took over 6 months and cost over $500,000.

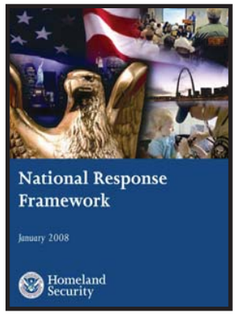
House tented for chlorine dioxide fumigation

The intent of the National Contingency Plan (NCP) is to develop a national response capability and promote overall coordination among the hierarchy of emergency response organizations and response or contingency plans.

In coordinating a response to hazardous substance releases and oil spills, EPA New England shares its expertise and resources with other government agencies, private industry and non-governmental organizations. EPA New England and the U.S. Coast Guard, co-chair the Regional Response Team, which has representatives from 16 federal agencies, six states, and nine federally-recognized tribes in New England.

The National Response Framework

EPA New England's Emergency Planning and Response Branch not only serves as the focal point for response to routine incidents, it also is serves as the main point for coordination in the event that EPA deploys during a major national incident (as required under the Department of Homeland Security's "National Response Framework").



National Response Framework

The Framework defines the key principles, roles, and structures that organize the way we respond as a Nation. It describes how communities, tribes, States, the Federal Government, and private-sector and nongovernmental partners apply these principles for a coordinated, effective national response. It also identifies special circumstances where the Federal Government exercises a larger role, including incidents where Federal interests are involved and catastrophic incidents where a State would require significant support. The Framework enables first responders, decision-makers, and supporting entities to provide a unified national response.

Under the National Response Framework, the federal Department of Homeland Security has assigned EPA to take the lead in responding to inland oil and hazardous material spills. The U.S. Coast Guard leads response actions when spills reach waterways near or offshore. EPA is also assigned a support role with other agencies in emergencies related to critical infrastructure (e.g., drinking water and wastewater), communications, agriculture, decontamination, and radiological response.

The National Response Framework (NRF) enables first responders, decision-makers, and supporting entities to provide a unified national response.

In addition to executing its designated roles and responsibilities under the National Response Framework, EPA, with it's cadre of highly trained personnel, has also learned to "expect the unexpected" when it comes to its planning and response activities. For example, during the crisis immediately following Hurricane Katrina, EPA turned its water sampling boats into lifesaving vessels as Agency personnel and contractors performed search and rescue functions to pull more than 800 people from the flood waters to safety.

EPA Funding for Clean-up Activities

During an emergency, EPA's first priority is to protect the environment and human health. It is the OSC's job to ensure that the clean-up, whether accomplished by industry, local, state, or federal officials, is appropriate, timely, and minimizes human health impacts and environmental damage. It is EPA's goal to ensure that responsible parties pay to clean-up their own spills and releases. However, if responsible parties are not known or are not immediately willing or able to conduct necessary response activities, EPA has access to Federal funds to perform the clean-up, and will seek to recover those costs at a later date.

Level A Exercise: Sampling and Evidence Collection.

TOPOFF 3 National Exercise

Regional Training

Every program at EPA may be called to action during a national disaster or environmental emergency. As a result, all EPA New England staff are required to be familiar with the National Response Framework and are all trained in the Incident Command System.

Incident Command System Training

Under the National Response Framework, a federal Incident Command System is put in place when a disaster occurs, creating a single organization and set of rules to guide federal and state agencies working together towards common goals. All EPA New England Emergency staff participates in exercises ranging from incidents such as simulated oil spills to hurricanes and pandemics.

Responding to National Events in the Spotlight

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita:

One hundred EPA New England staff members responded to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. New England staff members were on the scene within a week of Katrina beginning in August 2005, and remained until April 2006. EPA New England personnel were involved in a broad range of activities: they provided public information and community outreach, responded to oil releases, helped collect household hazardous waste, recovered hazardous material and containers and supported general operations.

Aerial View: Waste Collection

Segregating waste for disposal.

land employees have completed beginning level ICS training (IS-100 Introduction to Incident Command System, and IS-200 ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents) so that they can understand the basic structure of incident response. In addition, more than one- quarter of EPA New England staff members have received advanced level ICS training, including all senior staff. EPA New England has also trained more than six people to serve in each of eleven key leadership positions for an EPA Incident Management Team.

Based in New England, TOPOFF3 involved more than 10,000 participants representing more than 200 federal, state, local, tribal, private sector and international agencies, organizations and volunteer groups.

Responding to National Events in the Spotlight

Space Shuttle Columbia:

In 2003, EPA New England participated in the search and recovery of hazardous remnants from Space Shuttle Columbia following its in-flight disintegration over Texas.

NASA official inspects debris.

Debris from the wing of Space Shuttle Columbia.

Preparedness Training Exercises
Training exercises let EPA New England responders practice response techniques. The exercises help reduce vulnerabilities and hone recovery capabilities in a risk-free environment. EPA works with other federal agencies to help states, cities and towns assess and increase their capacity to prevent or respond to a disaster. EPA New England Emergency Response personnel participate in an exercise program that includes internal, regional, national and international level exercises.

- **Internal Level A Exercises**
  Several times each year EPA emergency personnel participate in simulated response exercises involving a release of hazardous materials or weapons of mass destruction. These exercises give emergency responders experience using the specialized personnel protective gear and equipment. EPA personnel gain hands-on experience monitoring, sampling, conducting decontamination procedures and setting up a command post during these simulated crises.

- **Regional Exercises**
  Emergency staff members participate many times every year in simulation exercises. These range from incidents such as simulated oil spills to hurricanes and pandemics.

National Exercises-The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Top Officials Exercises (TOPOFF).

The TOPOFF exercises are national training exercises mandated by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity to address major emergencies such as terrorist attacks involving weapons of mass destruction. Based in New England, TOPOFF 3 involved more than 10,000 participants representing more than 200 federal, state, local, tribal, private sector and international agencies, organizations and volunteer groups. The scenario depicted a complex terrorist attack involving the simultaneous release of chemical and biological warfare agents in Connecticut and New Jersey that led to national and international response. Over the course of several days fire personnel conducted search and rescue missions, hospitals treated the "injured," subject-matter experts analyzed the effects of the attack on public health and top government officials deployed resources and made the difficult decisions needed to save lives. EPA New England also participated in TOPOFF 4 in October 2007 in Arizona, Guam, and Oregon. This full-scale exercise simulated the response to an attack by a radiological dispersal device. More than 15,000 participants representing international, federal, state, local, and territorial entities took part in the exercise. Activities also took place in Washington, D.C. In coordination with the Department of State, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia were partners in the exercise. TOPOFF 4 was the largest segment of the series to date, engaging participants on all levels of government.

International Exercises—CANUSLANT and CANUSEAST
In September 2007, EPA participated in the Joint U.S./Canada international exercise for responding to a simulated oil spill in the Gulf of Maine. The exercise was sponsored by the US Coast Guard and the Canadian Coast Guard as part of the required biennial joint exercises conducted under the Joint Marine Pollution Contingency Plan. More than 30 US and Canadian organizations participated in the four-day exercise, which test the establishment of an International Response Zone, Joint Modeling, a Joint Environmental Unit, a Joint Information Center and test de-oiling of live wild birds. In November 2006, EPA took part in a joint U.S./Canada CANUSEAST exercise that simulated an inland hazardous release in Canada near the US border. The three-day exercise was sponsored by Environment Canada. More than 20 US and Canadian organizations participated. EPA's role was to test a border crossing with personnel, vehicles and monitoring equipment, assess environmental conditions, take part in the incident command and simulate providing government and contractor help.

Water Security

Drinking water systems across New England have met federal requirements to assess their vulnerabilities to intentional attacks and update response plans for emergencies. The federal Bioterrorism Act of 2002, passed after 9/11, requires drinking water systems that serve more than 3,300 people to complete these assessments and plans. EPA New England and the New England Water Works Association helped systems comply with the law by developing software called ASSET, which helps small systems assess their vulnerabilities. EPA New England and the association also ran more than 50 workshops to train water systems managers on emergency response protocol. While the smallest systems are not required to conduct assessments, EPA encouraged all systems to prepare for emergencies.

To encourage local action, EPA New England has developed numerous outreach materials such as: "Top Ten Water Security Lists for Water Operators and Local Emergency Planners"; Security Posters; and the Water Watchers Brochure.

Learn more at www.epa.gov/region1/eco/drinkwater/dw-security.html

EPA New England and the New England Water Works Association ran more than 50 workshops to train water systems managers on emergency response protocol.

Regional Emergency Response Sites in the Spotlight

EPA personnel have provided pandemic awareness training to water system managers so they can keep water running even with the severe staff and resource shortages that could result from a pandemic influenza. Since an episode of pandemic flu would present a severe threat to this country, EPA has incorporated pandemic awareness and planning into exercise training and other programs across New England. Related outreach materials developed by EPA New England include the "Top 10 List: Pandemic and Natural Disasters Notebook."

Learn more at: http://www.epa.gov/region1/eco/drinkwater/pandemic_preparedness.html

EPA has sponsored one-day workshops throughout New England, teaching water suppliers how to use Incident Command Training (ICS) in their own emergency response plans.

WATER AND WASTEWATER FACILITIES GET INCIDENT COMMAND TRAINING

EPA is supporting the Incident Command System training for water and wastewater facility operators to better understand this on-scene system for managing the response to all hazard incidents. EPA has sponsored one-day workshops throughout New England teaching water suppliers how to use ICS in their own emergency response plans, and how to integrate with other first responders during water emergencies.

Law Enforcement Initiative

Training materials developed by EPA New England will help law enforcement and water and wastewater facilities work together to address security concerns. The training and materials give law enforcement personnel a better understanding of the water sector, while water and wastewater personnel learn

Regional Emergency Response Sites in the Spotlight

Danvers, MA Chemical Plant Explosion:

At 3:00 am on the morning before Thanksgiving 2006, a massive explosion occurred in Danvers, Massachusetts, originating at a building that housed two solvent-based paint manufacturers. During the initial phase of operations EPA worked closely with other local, state and federal perimeter air monitoring to ensure proper evacuations were taking place and provided information to help emergency workers make determinations about proper personal protective equipment for response operations.. After completion of an investigation into the cause of the accident, the site was turned over to EPA to begin clean-up. In March 2007, EPA finished the clean-up with the removal of 650 drums, 7,500 gallons of recyclable solvents from an underground storage tank 30,000 gallons of non-hazardous liquids, and 380 cubic yards of hazardous materials. MassDEP oversaw the demolition and disposal of solid wastes from two large marina buildings, three commercial buildings and seven homes. The clean-up took over 4 months and cost approximately $1,275,000.

Before: Debris and rubble after the explosion.

After: Once the clean-up was complete.

EPA's New England office helped states, water associations and utilities create a Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network that will serve the region's drinking water and wastewater utilities.

how to address potential threats to their respective facilities from a law enforcement perspective. EPA New England staff developed Law Enforcement Cross-Training Books and a Law Enforcement Training CD.

Mutual Aid Efforts

After the 2005 hurricane season wreaked havoc on water and wastewater utilities across the Gulf Coast, the federal government and utilities realized utilities needed a process for sharing resources during an emergency. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita left utilities facing countless repairs, fuel shortages and unreliable or nonexistent communications systems. Emergency responders soon learned that the concept of "utilities helping utilities" was critical to getting water and wastewater systems up and running again. Since then, the federal government has worked with states and utilities to formalize this idea of mutual aid in emergencies. With support from EPA's Water Security Division, EPA's New England office helped states, water associations and utilities create a Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network that will serve the region's drinking water and wastewater utilities. State steering committees are pursuing separate networks, called WARNs, within each state, and will be working with EPA to form a New England-wide mutual aid program to aid utilities across state boundaries.

The EPA New England Regional Laboratory's Drinking Water Laboratory Response Preparedness Project is designed to improve intra-regional laboratory preparedness for response to actual or suspected water contamination incidents.

Improving Regional Laboratory Capabilities

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the Katrina response prompted EPA to reevaluate laboratory testing requirements to support response to and recovery from major disasters. EPA New England's state-of-the-art regional laboratory in Chelmsford, Mass. has focused its efforts on building intra-regional laboratory cooperation and increasing capability to provide environmental data to emergency responders. Specifically, the laboratory is working on three major projects to enhance regional laboratory response capabilities: developing a regional laboratory response plan with state environmental and public health laboratories, assessment of a prototype facility that is designed to screen suspicious or unidentified samples; and developing the ability to analyze chemical warfare agents and their environmental degradation products.

All Hazard Receipt Facility (AHRF)

- **Regional Laboratory Response Planning**

  The EPA Water Security Division is sponsoring a nationwide project to increase cooperation between laboratories in responding to drinking water emergencies. This effort, the Drinking Water Laboratory Response Preparedness Project, is designed to improve intra-regional laboratory preparedness for response to actual or suspected water contamination incidents. The project was developed in partnership with EPA regional, drinking water utilities and state laboratories to provide a coordinated laboratory response capability. In each of EPA's ten regions, representatives from public health and environmental laboratories developed a laboratory response plan and conducted a tabletop exercise of the plan. The New England Regional Laboratory Response Plan was tested in a first of its kind multi-laboratory functional exercise in February 2008. The exercise simulated a biological and chemical contamination incident at a drinking water utility and required seven participating labs to respond in accordance with the plan. To provide a more realistic scenario and involve the public health laboratories the event also included a simultaneous bio-monitoring exercise developed by the New England state public health laboratories. This required testing samples from humans to evaluate exposure to contaminated drinking water.

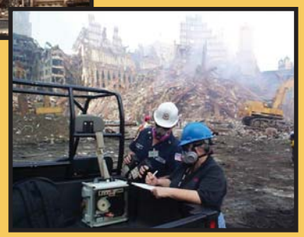
The EPA New England Regional Laboratory is working on three major projects to enhance regional laboratory response capabilites.

Responding to National Events in the Spotlight

September 11, 2001 – Terrorist Attack on the World Trade Centers:

EPA New England responded to the World Trade Center clean-up following the terrorist attack and performed air monitoring, sampling and personnel decontamination.

Air monitoring station in lower Manhattan.



Performing air sampling at ground zero.

In April 2008, EPA New England became the first EPA laboratory to begin work with ultra-dilute chemical warfare agents.

- **Prototype Laboratory to Identify Hazards**
  After September 11, 2001 and the subsequent anthrax attacks, the public health and environmental laboratory community requested that the federal government develop a standardized approach for receiving and screening samples under conditions that are designed to protect laboratory facilities and staff. The federal response has been the development of the prototype All Hazard Receipt Facility (AHRF) and the All Hazards Screening Protocol. The AHRF and All Hazards Screening Protocol were designed to assess explosive, chemical and radiological hazards that might be associated with an unknown or suspicious sample, to assist laboratory managers in making safe and appropriate decisions about sample acceptance and further laboratory analysis. In 2007 an evaluation of the prototype AHRF was conducted at the EPA New England Regional and the New York State Public Health laboratories to assess the performance of the prototype laboratory system. The success of this project will result in a standard describing critical laboratory design and engineering criteria and a robust unknown sample screening protocol which can be flexibly integrated into public health and environmental laboratories throughout the country.

- **Expanding testing capabilities to include chemical warfare agents**
  EPA New England has also entered into a pilot project with EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response and the Department of Homeland Security to develop the ability to analyze soil, debris, and water samples for specialized chemicals that might be used in terrorist incidents. The Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response selected EPA New England as one of the initial pilot sites to establish the capability to analyze chemical warfare agents and their environmental degradation products in the northeast. In April 2008 EPA New England became the first EPA laboratory to begin work with Ultra-Dilute chemical warfare agents.

Working with State and Local Responders /Chemical Preparedness

EPA's emergency preparedness staff provides training and data to local emergency response staff to ensure that every "local emergency planning commission" (LEPC) can use its own community data to prevent and plan for accidental chemical releases. EPA also works with state emergency response committees (SERCs) and local emergency personnel to be sure facilities with chemicals comply with federal planning and right to know laws (EPCRA) and, if they do not, to help them comply. Specifically, EPA trains local and state response staff in "Computer-aided Management of Emergency Operations" (CAMEO), software that models fire and explosion hazards of a particular community. These hazards may be jet fires, oil fires, vapor cloud explosions and flash fire, as well as toxic threats. EPA routinely holds tabletop exercises with local and state emergency responders and water suppliers throughout New England to be sure response plans have been practiced and will be followed in a real emergency.

Scientist Analyzes Sample for Hazards.

EPA routinely holds tabletop exercises with local and state emergency responders and water suppliers throughout New England to be sure response plans have been practiced.

Responding to National Events in the Spotlight

Anthrax Terrorist Attacks:

Between 2001 and 2002, EPA New England staff helped sample and decontaminate buildings around Capitol Hill in Washington DC and a US Postal Service facility in Wallingford, CT that were contaminated with anthrax.

HEPA vacuuming the U.S. Senate offices to remove anthrax spores.

Chemical Safety Enforcement
EPA New England enforces critical emergency planning laws, such as the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act, which requires public awareness of chemicals at individual facilities, their uses, and their potential releases into the environment. EPA also enforces a Clean Air Act rules requiring facilities that emit hazardous substances to have updated risk management plans and to comply with general duty requirements for safe operations.

Debris Management
Every year natural disasters, such as fires, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tornadoes, pose significant debris management challenges for communities that must handle large quantities of disaster debris. EPA New England is working with state and local authorities to encourage proactive plans for dealing with the problems associated with large quantities of disaster debris. A recent guide, entitled, "Planning for Natural Disaster Debris" was developed by EPA's Office of Solid Waste which offers steps a community can take to prepare for and deal with the waste created by natural disasters and to speed recovery after such disasters. The guide also suggests ways communities can reduce the burden on their municipal solid waste management systems. EPA is working with state and local environmental and emergency management agencies to ensure that debris management plans are being put in place to handle the problems associated with disaster debris.

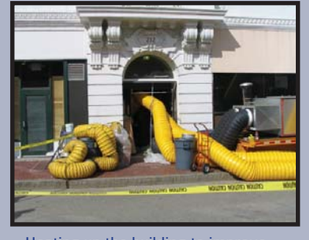
Continuity of EPA Essential Operations During Emergencies
EPA is required by the federal government to have plans for operating during an emergency. For example, the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan requires Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) to protect employees, maintain essential functions of EPA, support a federal response, and aid in communication about pandemic planning and response. EPA New England has identified key personnel who perform essential functions and are part of a group that must be prepared in the event of a pandemic. The COOP personnel as well as other key and back-up personnel performing "essential functions" were given special IT equipment, including blackberries, laptops and cell phones, so they can tele-work if EPA's office buildings are closed, or in the event of another emergency. These capabilities were tested in a three-day regional COOP/telework exercise involving 155 regional staff.

EPA New England is working with state and local authorities to encourage proactive plans for dealing with the problems associated with large quantities of disaster debris.

Regional Emergency Response Sites in the Spotlight

Rhode Island School of Design Mercury Release, Providence, RI.

When mercury was released on a Sunday in May 2006 in a school hallway, the RI Dept. of Environmental Management (RIDEM) requested that EPA help monitor the air to determine the extent of mercury contamination and to ensure an adequate clean-up. Two OSCs and seven EPA contractors were deployed for 10 days until a school-funded private contractor took over and completed the clean-up activities. EPA and RIDEM found that the extent of mercury contamination impacted a far greater area than was originally anticipated, requiring a more extensive clean-up to ensure the safety of students and staff in the school.



Heating up the building to improve remediation techniques.

Cleaning mercury-contaminated shoes.

Who to Call in an Emergency

To report oil spills and hazardous substance releases, and/or other environmental emergencies:

Contact the National Response Center at:

1-800-424-8802

or

Call the EPA New England 24-hour Hotline:

1-617-723-8928

Who to Call at EPA for Routine Inquiries

Main Number (Help Desk):
617-918-2000

Emergency Planning and Response Branch:
617-918-1236

New England Regional Laboratory:
617-918-8300

Drinking Water and Wastewater:
617-918-1500

Public Affairs:
617-918-1010

Coordinating with State Partners

EPA New England holds senior-level meetings with State Environmental Agencies from all six New England states to discuss homeland security efforts and debris management planning. To further these talks EPA New England will bring together state and federal homeland security leaders at a yearly Homeland Security Environmental Summit to discuss regional resources, assets and protocols that would be utilized in the event of a major homeland security event. The goal of the meetings and Summits are to promote a regionalized approach during a Homeland Security incident and highlight best practices and identify gaps in regional planning efforts.

A Lens on the Future:

Teams for Specialized Missions

EPA is developing specialized teams with expertise in water assessment and debris management to work in "mission-essential" teams during emergencies. These teams of volunteers will receive specialized training to help face the unique challenges of catastrophic emergencies.

Emergency Command Shelter
(Seen Above Deployed During the
Democratic National Convention in 2004)

A View Inside the Emergency Command Shelter.