

Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management

2015 Refugio Oil Spill After-Action Report and Improvement Plan



Katie Freeman, Director of Operations
Hagerty Consulting, Inc.
September 20, 2016

Recommended Actions

- A. Receive the “2015 Refugio Oil Spill After Action Report and Improvement Plan” identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement based on the lessons learned associated with the County’s response to the May 19, 2015, Refugio Oil Spill; and,
- B. Adopt a Resolution Terminating the Proclamation of a Local Emergency Related to the Refugio Beach Oil Spill, declared by the Director of Emergency Management on May 20, 2015, and ratified by the Board of Supervisors at least every 30 days thereafter; and,
- C. Determine that these activities are exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review

Summary Process

- ◆ **Hagerty Consulting, Inc. (Hagerty) was engaged by the County of Santa Barbara in March of 2016 to support the after-action review process.**
 - ◆ Authority to conduct the review is established in the *California Emergency Services Act* and California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Subdivision 4, Office of Oil Spill Response, Chapter 5.
- ◆ **Hagerty's independent review of findings includes event documentation and direct feedback from stakeholders.**
 - ◆ March 18 to April 8: Collect information and relevant documentation.
 - ◆ March 18 to April 8: Review relevant documentation.
 - ◆ April 6 to May 31: Conduct group and one-on-one meetings with various stakeholders.
 - ◆ April 4 to June 10: Develop first draft after-action report (AAR).
 - ◆ June 10 to June 30: Review draft AAR with County stakeholders.
 - ◆ July 25 to August 19: Public comment period.
 - ◆ August 20 to September 6: Final revision of AAR.

Summary Process

After-Action Report Purpose

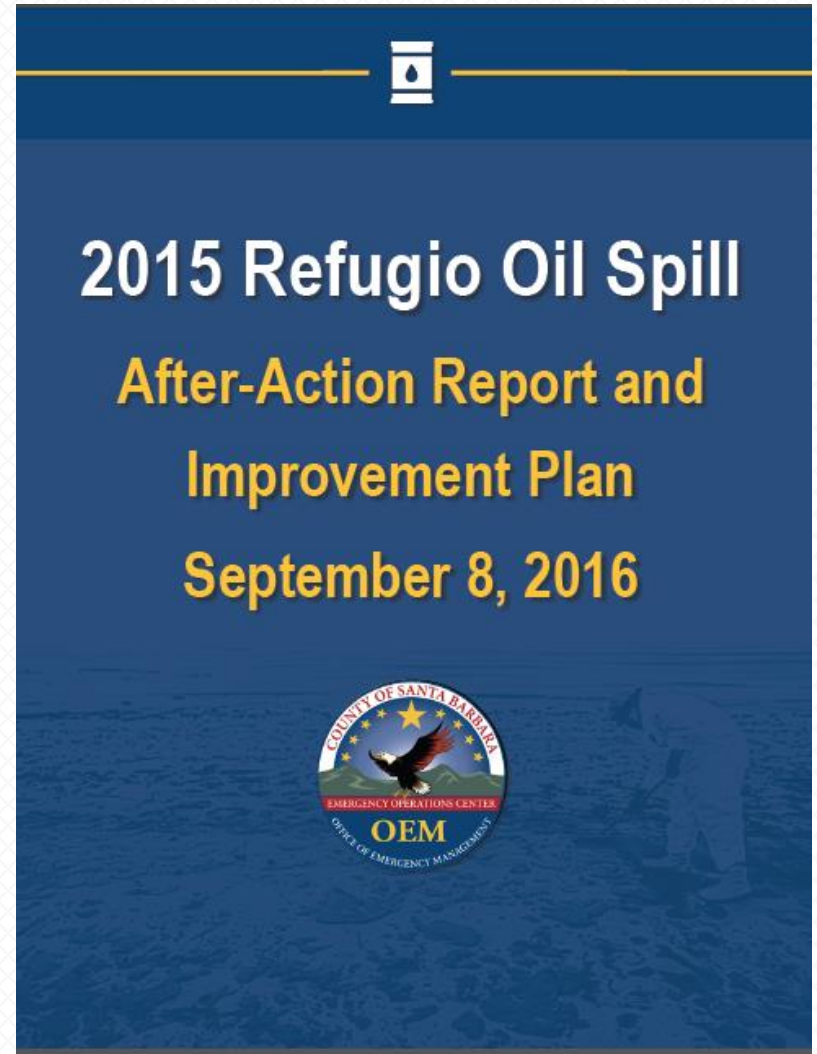
- ◆ To assesses the overall response of Santa Barbara County, documenting strengths, areas for improvement, and corrective actions specific to planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise capabilities.
- ◆ The AAR does not include a review and evaluation of the response of State and Federal partners; these items are discussed only as they impact the County.

After-Action Process

- ◆ The process for developing and finalizing the AAR was collaborative and intentionally iterative and was crafted to offer stakeholders across and within Santa Barbara County the opportunity to provide their input to increase the capability of the County to respond to a future oil spill.

After-Action Report Organization

- ◆ **Executive Summary**
- ◆ **Incident Overview**
- ◆ **Description of Data Sources**
- ◆ **Analysis**
 - ◆ Strengths, Areas for Improvement, References, Analysis, Recommendations
- ◆ **Appendices**
 - ◆ Improvement Plan, After-Action Meeting Participants, After-Action Meeting Participant Feedback Data, Debrief Participants, Acronyms and Abbreviations, Event Images, Public Comments, Response Letters



Primary Strengths

- ◆ **The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County and State of California Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) designates a local on-scene coordinator (LOSC) to participate in unified command (UC).**
 - ◆ While the paramount authority for decision-making remains with the federal on-scene coordinator (FOSC) and state incident commander (SIC) in UC, without the MOU, the County may not be represented on UC, which would remove the County having a direct role in the decision-making process.
 - ◆ The County preserved emergency permitting authority in the MOU through a provision that specifies that the decisions of UC do not preempt the County or impacted jurisdictions from “enforcing applicable ordinances, permit conditions, or other provisions of law such that they do not conflict with orders issued by the FOSC or SIC during the response.”
 - ◆ Preservation of this authority has been critical to the County’s efforts to ensure comprehensive cleanup of impacted beaches and involvement from the responsible party (RP) as response operations have transitioned into the final phase.

Primary Strengths

- ◆ **County Public Health Department personnel and contract support to Planning and Development were both operational on the impacted beaches.**
 - ◆ Direct support was provided from the Public Health Department related to health and safety monitoring at the incident site, and department staff were included on several UC environmental unit workgroups and on field teams.
 - ◆ This internal capability provided the County visibility into field operations and demonstrates a strength in internal capability among County staff.
- ◆ **The County Oil Response Group (COR) functioned as a multi-agency coordination (MAC) group, supporting decision-making and collaboration with the LOSC as the operation transitioned from immediate response into long-term response and recovery operations.**
 - ◆ While the COR was not immediately established following the incident, when it was established the COR increased visibility into the operations of UC and supported an efficient decision-making structure for the County.

Primary Areas for Improvement

- ◆ **While implementation of the COR is considered a primary strength for the County, the top area for improvement remains internal coordination to support decision-making and coordination with the LOSC in UC.**
 - ◆ Prior to establishing the COR, direct support and coordination with the LOSC was primarily ad-hoc.
 - ◆ Meetings were held with the Recovery Advisory Council and Disaster Council, which included elected officials from the County; the COR, however, did not include representation from elected officials.
 - ◆ While the LOSC operated effectively in UC as it applies to initial response decision-making, the absence of an operational structure to support long-term decision-making resulted in decisions begin made in UC without consensus from County stakeholders.

Primary Areas for Improvement

- ◆ **While a joint information center (JIC) was established to support UC at the ICP, a separate JIC specific to the County was not established.**
 - ◆ The lack of a separate County JIC, or clear protocols on what information needed to be approved by UC, resulted in delayed public messaging regarding general incident information, and in some cases, delayed messaging about specific critical issues, like public health notifications.
 - ◆ The County expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of public information and overall management of the JIC to UC. In an attempt to address these concerns, the County established various systems to ensure key stakeholders were provided information.
 - ◆ The operation experienced issues associated with press conferences, including the lack of an established schedule for press conferences and prevention of participation from local and County officials in those press conferences. Local press and the general public were also denied access to some press conferences.

Primary Areas for Improvement

- ◆ **The County was not involved in staffing positions in the incident command post (ICP), an area for improvement that could enhance internal County coordination and operations.**
 - ◆ While the LOSC serves a role in establishing incident objectives and crafting the incident action plan (IAP) through UC, strategic guidance and implementation of the IAP falls to the ICP.
 - ◆ Local and County partners were not offered a significant opportunity to provide staff to the ICP by UC, creating an additional disconnect between operations through UC and the County, particularly when the ICP was relocated from the County emergency operations center (EOC).

Public Comment

- ◆ **The County received comments from the public between July 25 and August 19.**
 - ◆ Five organizations provided 34 comments.
 - ◆ Five comments resulted in direct changes to the AAR.
 - ◆ Four changes to the AAR were editorial to correct statements of fact.
 - ◆ One change to the AAR expanded the scope of one recommendation (Recommendation 16.1).
 - ◆ The majority of comments specific to the AAR were addressed in recommendations and the supporting narrative for recommendations, and therefore did not necessitate changes to the document.
 - ◆ The Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management (SBCOEM) will consider all public comments in the implementation of recommendations, including both process and content, to revise and update the Santa Barbara Operational Area Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

The Path Forward

- ◆ **This report is a necessary milestone on a continual cycle of improvement.**
 - ◆ SBCOEM hosted the United States Coast Guard (USCG) / Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region IX Regional Response Team meeting on January 13-14, 2016.
 - ◆ SBCOEM hosted the quarterly Area Committee (AC) meeting on September 8, 2016, and has attended all other AC meetings.
 - ◆ SBCOEM will host an Office of Spill Prevention and Response oil spill workshop on September 21, 2016.
 - ◆ Santa Barbara County will co-chair the Area Committee Refugio Incident Sub-Committee, and participate in its four working groups (Information Management, Command and Control, Operational Needs, and Applied Technology/Research Vetting). The working groups will address action items to improve issues identified in the Federal, State, and County AARs.
 - ◆ SBCOEM will work with local jurisdictions and stakeholders to provide feedback to the update to the Santa Barbara Operational Area Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

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Key Contacts

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