BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Environment and Parks

INTERIM

Spills Management Plan

Environmental Emergency Branch

Disclaimer: *The Interim Spills Management Plan consolidates the Inland Oil Spills Response Plan (2013) and the Hazardous Materials Response Plan (2013) and serves as a placeholder until the plan is finalized. The Ministry of Environment and Parks will follow guidance from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness to meet consultation and cooperation requirements with First Nations during the risk assessment process, as required under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act and Regulation. This risk assessment, focused on hazardous material incidents (hazardous spills on site or on transport route), will inform the final version of the plan.*

Overview

The Environmental Emergency Branch (EEB) is mandated by the *Ministry of Environment Act* (MEA) to plan for, coordinate, implement, and manage a program to protect the welfare of the public and environment in the event of an environmental emergency. EEB is responsible for leading the province in managing spills by administering and enforcing the *Environmental Management Act* (EMA) and its related regulations. Ministry of Environment and Parks (ENV), through the EEB, has the authority to carry out response actions as the provincial lead in the following areas:

- Inter-tidal zone
- Inland waterways (lakes, rivers, streams, creeks etc.)
- Provincial land-based areas
- Inland incidents that migrate offshore

Under EMA, spill *"means the introduction into the environment, other than as authorized under this Act and whether intentional or unintentional, of a substance or thing that has the potential to cause adverse effects to the environment, human health or infrastructure"*. Spills may contain hazardous or non-hazardous materials, both of which can pose risks to the environment, human health or infrastructure. Regardless of the substance, provincial legislation dictates a Responsible Person in relation to a spill must ensure that the persons with the requisite skills, experience and resources are taking the necessary actions to address the threat or hazard caused by the spilled substance. Hazardous materials may include transported dangerous goods, special waste and recycled materials.

Hazardous Material Spills	**Non-Hazardous Material Spills**
Dangerous Goods • Explosives, Gases, Flammable and combustible liquids, Flammable solids, Oxidizing substances, Poisonous (toxic) and infectious substances, nuclear substances, and corrosives. **Recycled Materials** • Items containing residues of dangerous goods including used oils, solvents, paint thinners, batteries, electronic waste, and contaminated rags, filters, or containers.	**Potable or Drinkable water** • Chlorine levels make potable or drinkable water safe for human health however it can impact the environment. **Organic matter** • Products like grain or hops can be impactful to waterways by reducing the oxygen content to harmful levels to aquatic life. **Other** • Clothing, containers, miscellaneous dangerous goods, and the containers or vessels those goods are transported in.

As lead provincial agency for spills, the Province of British Columbia is committed to protecting British Columbia's (BC) resources including coastal environmental resources from harmful spills that emanate from marine vessels, industrial facilities and inland sources.

Purpose

The purpose of the Spills Management Plan (SMP) is to provide an overview of provincial spill management in BC and align with hazard-lead ministry plan requirements under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) and supporting regulations. This plan is supported by internal operational guidelines, policies and standard operating procedures. This plan serves as the foundation for multiple integrated plans, memorandums of understanding and mutual aid agreements with partners and stakeholders.

Audience

This document describes the processes that drive EEB's actions during a spill incident and is intended for ENV staff, other provincial ministries, federal partners, industry, Indigenous peoples, local governments and the public.

Scope[1]

In scope:

- Overview of EEB spill management
- Summary of actions taken by EEB during spill incidents
- Public information, communication and notifications
- Compliance and enforcement

Out of scope:

- Site level response and recovery procedures
- First Nation, local government and federal government response procedures
- Procedures for evacuations and evacuee supports during spill incidents (under local government and First Nation jurisdiction)
- Incidents that occur outside of provincial jurisdiction

[1] Hazards such as wildfires, floods, earthquakes, etc. often have a spill component that EEB is required to manage.

Intersectional Disadvantage

EEB recognizes that emergency events are not borne equally across the province. Intersectional disadvantage refers to the overlapping and interacting social categorizations such as Indigenous identity, race, economic status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, and ability—that can lead to compounded forms of discrimination or impacts, especially during emergencies. During a spill, disproportionate impacts may be faced by two or more of the following groups or contexts:

- Indigenous communities, whose cultural practices, traditional food sources, and land use may be directly affected
- Vulnerable individuals, such as children, elders, people with disabilities, or those with limited economic means who may require additional support
- People in rural, remote, agricultural, or coastal communities, where limited infrastructure, single access routes, or reliance on natural resources can intensify the effects of a spill

EEB is committed to recognizing and addressing intersectionality during spill incidents through equitable response planning, inclusive collaboration, and culturally respectful engagement.

Governance

The primary role of government is to demonstrate and apply governance. It is the government that holds the responsibility to ensure that appropriate priorities for public health, infrastructure and environmental protection are established and to monitor response performance, not the Responsible Person (RP).

Legislative Context

Ministry of Environment Act

The *Ministry of Environment Act* (MEA) establishes the mandate to the Ministry of Environment and Parks (ENV), including the provision "to plan for, coordinate, implement and manage a program to protect the welfare of the public in the event of an environmental emergency or disaster."

Environmental Management Act

The *Environmental Management Act* (EMA) outlines the powers, responsibilities, and mandate to plan for, coordinate, implement, and manage a program to protect the welfare of the public and environment in the event of an environmental emergency. EMA provides the legal foundation for ENV to fulfill its duties effectively and transparently.

Spill Reporting Regulation

The *Spill Reporting Regulation* (SRR) prescribes the information that is required, including the time and manner when reporting a spill incident.

Spill Preparedness, Response and Recovery Regulation

The *Spill Preparedness, Response and Recovery Regulation* (SPRR) set a foundation for strengthening spill preparedness, response and recovery in BC.

Spill Contingency Planning Regulation

The *Spill Contingency Planning Regulation* (SCPR) is a proactive obligation placed on Regulated Persons to demonstrate the capability to respond to a spill based on worst case scenario.

Hazardous Waste Regulation

The *Hazardous Waste Regulation* (HWR) governs the management, storage, transportation, and disposal of hazardous waste within the province. Its purpose is to protect human health and the environment by ensuring that hazardous waste is handled safely and responsibly throughout its lifecycle.

Emergency and Disaster Management Act

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* (EDMA) provides a legal framework for managing emergencies and disasters in BC.

Emergency and Disaster Management Regulation

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Regulation* (EDMR) designates ENV as the hazard-lead ministry, through EMA, for hazardous materials (hazardous spills on site or on transport route).

Guiding Principles

Role of Indigenous Peoples

EEB recognizes the critical role of Indigenous peoples in the stewardship of traditional territories and ensures meaningful engagement during spill incidents. Guided by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, as well as the principles of United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), EEB respects Indigenous Knowledge systems, treaty rights, and cultural expertise. By collaborating with Indigenous communities, EEB fosters equitable and informed spill response and recovery while upholding constitutional and international commitments.

The SMP advances the notification, participation and engagement of Indigenous people in spill incidents in BC. The plan promotes the explicit integration of Indigenous People as equal governance partners to provincial agencies to manage and support spill incident preparedness, response and recovery. This plan aims to:

- **Promote improved notification to Indigenous peoples:** Indigenous communities are fully engaged and notified at the outset of a spill incident to provide full autonomy in decision making to engage in the spill response and recovery.
- **Promote Collaboration during Spill Incidents**: encourages cooperation among Indigenous peoples, provincial agencies to ensure an integrated and effective response to spills. Shared decision making recognizes the responsibilities based on jurisdiction, authority, mandate and stewardship responsibility.
- **Recognize Shared Responsibility for Spill Management**: Acknowledges that no single government or entity has complete control over the management of coastal resources and the potential impacts of spills. Emphasizes that effective spill response requires shared stewardship, where Indigenous knowledge and perspectives play a key role in managing and restoring the impacted environment. EEB will engage with Indigenous peoples to develop shared objectives in relation to spill response.
- **Integrate Indigenous Knowledge into Spill Incidents**: Ensures that Indigenous knowledge, including ecological and cultural insights, is integrated into spill preparedness, response, and recovery plans. This ensures that decisions are based on comprehensive environmental understanding and are responsive to the needs of impacted communities.
- **Facilitate Ongoing Improvement in Spill Management**: Builds a foundation for continuous improvement of spill preparedness and response through collaboration among Indigenous peoples, provincial, and federal governments. This approach ensures adaptive management practices that are responsive to changing environmental conditions and improve spill response capabilities over time.

Polluter Pay Principle

The polluter-pay principle is a key tenet of EMA, Part 7, which holds those responsible for spills (the Responsible Person (RP)) responsible for the costs of stabilization, containment, removal and clean up of a spill and is designed to keep the cost of response off taxpayers. Section 91.2 of EMA identifies the actions that the RP must take in the event of a spill.

If the Province responds to a spill, either fully or partially, it can recover the associated costs from the RP under Section 91.4 of EMA.

Emergency Management Phases

While the phases of the emergency management continuum overlap and often happen concurrently, there are distinct measures that EEB takes in preparedness, response and recovery.

Preparedness

Proactive measures taken in readiness to respond to and recover from spill incidents. This involves comprehensive planning, training, exercising, resource allocation, and coordination with emergency management partners.

Risk Assessments *(Placeholder)*

ENV will conduct a risk assessment for hazardous material incidents (hazardous spills occurring on-site or during transport) once guidance from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) is provided. This risk assessment will focus on major spill scenarios and will be carried out in accordance with consultation and cooperation requirements outlined in the Emergency and Disaster Management Act and Regulation. The findings will directly inform the final version of the Spills Management Plan.

ENV is the delegated lead ministry for hazardous material incidents (hazardous spills on-site or on transport route). As a delegated lead ministry, ENV is required to complete a risk assessment, which includes the following:

- Climate or extreme weather events that can reasonably be expected to result from a changing global climate
- Intersectional disadvantages
- Local and Indigenous knowledge, if available

Additionally, each provincial risk assessment must:

- Be coordinated, and consistent in terms of methodology, format and content with risk assessments prepared by other lead ministers
- Assess how each hazard may cause, be the result of or otherwise relate to other hazards
- Assess the potential impacts each hazard may have on food and water security

Response

This phase begins once an incident has occurred and continues until the situation is stabilized. Response involves the actions taken by the Province, RP, Qualified Professionals (QP) and partner organizations to manage the immediate impacts of a spill incident. Effective response requires rapid assessment, decision-making, and deployment of resources to protect public health and the environment. Actions undertaken during response are found in Appendix 3.

Recovery

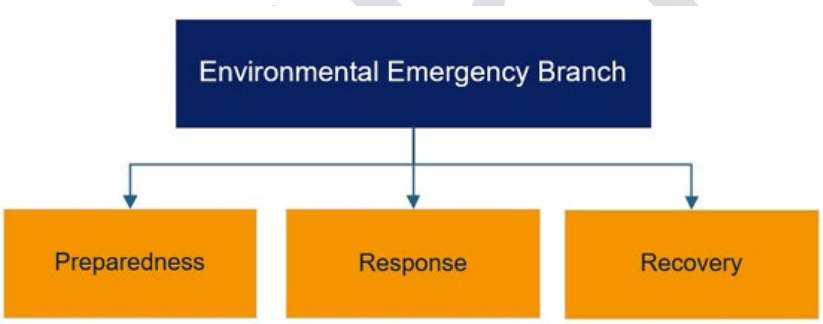
This phase focuses on restoring affected areas and communities following a spill incident. Recovery begins during the response phase but becomes more pronounced as emergency response actions conclude.

Recovery is a complex and multi-faceted process that requires sustained effort, resources, and support to achieve successful outcomes.

Environmental Emergency Branch

EEB holds the primary responsibility within ENV to ensure effective preparedness, response and recovery from spills in BC. As such, EEB is divided into the following sections:

- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery



Preparedness Section

The Preparedness Section facilitates the development of detailed plans, policies and procedures which outline EEB's actions taken before, during, and after a spill. Plans are developed in alignment with best practices and in coordination with partner agencies. The Preparedness Section participates in emergency preparedness working groups and is often the ENV or provincial lead for internal, external, inter-governmental and Indigenous initiatives.

Response Section

The Response Section's primary role is to measure the performance of the RP and determine incident priorities for the environment, human health and infrastructure. Response staff provide 24/7 environmental emergency response coverage, with staff strategically located throughout the province. Personnel are trained in hazardous materials response and oversee spill incidents based on geographic area.

The Response Section also assesses compliance and refers compliance infractions, as required, to the Compliance and Environmental Enforcement Branch (CEEB) to ensure that RPs are meeting legislative and regulatory obligations when responding to spills.

Under Section 91.4 of EMA, EEB holds the right to mount a government response to a spill incident if:

- There is no identified RP in relation to a spill
- There is reasonable grounds to believe government action is required to safeguard the environment, human health or infrastructure
- The RP requests that the government assist with spill response and recovery actions.

Recovery Section

The Recovery Section oversees and regulates the recovery actions undertaken by the RP by providing scientific advice and support to field personnel. Recovery has the authority to request the RP to undertake the necessary actions to manage and remediate, to the greatest extent reasonable, the impacts from a spill. If the RP is unable to undertake the necessary actions, EEB has the legislative authority to respond and take over the incident.

The Recovery Section provides support through activities across broad areas such as environmental impact assessments, environmental remediation and restoration, and cost recovery.

Exercises & Training

EEB offers opportunities for all staff to participate in exercises that build the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to fulfill their roles. Staff take part in both internal and external exercises to practice responding to various incident types and scales. External exercises also provide insight into the roles and authority of other regulators, Indigenous peoples, and the RP while fostering connections with response organizations. These relationships support more effective and efficient incident response.

As the provincial lead for spills, training is critical for ensuring safe and effective spill management. All training aims to be in accordance with the applicable standards (including the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards), best practices, other ministry policies, regulations and laws in effect.

EEB maintains an evergreen training matrix that is used to:

- Determine appropriate training requirements based on organizational role
- Track and record training and certifications
- Promote continuous improvement

Spill Response

EEB's response structure follows the Incident Command System (ICS), adapted to provincial needs, for managing spills. ICS is a standardized emergency management system designed to be scalable and flexible to meet the needs of single and multi-agency incidents, improving efficiency and effectiveness in response to emergencies. ICS is an international standard used by federal, provincial, local authorities and response organizations in Canada, that allows for effective communication and coordination during integrated incidents between these agencies.

EEB adheres to the BC Emergency Management System (BCEMS) response goals:

1. Ensure the health and safety of responders
2. Save lives
3. Reduce suffering
4. Protect public health
5. Protect government infrastructure
6. Protect property
7. Protect the environment
8. Reduce economic and social losses

During spill response, EEB follows an 11-step process (Appendix 4). Although the process appears linear, steps can be revisited once or multiple times depending on each incident. In summary, the following actions are taken during response.

Initial Report

Incidents are reported to the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC). Once received, the ECC initiates a Dangerous Goods Incident Report (DGIR), gathers the information required by Section 4 of the SRR, and notifies EEB. EEB receives briefings for all DGIRs and is responsible for determining jurisdictional lead and provincial involvement in incidents. If EEB is the provincial lead, it will verify the accuracy of the information and ensure that the RP is present and actively carrying out effective spill response measures.

If a spill falls outside EEB's lead role or is better handled by another government agency based on its mandate, EEB will refer the incident to the appropriate agency and offer support as needed.

Spill Incident	Lead Agency
Provincial Inland and Inland Waterways	ENV (EEB)
Marine Spill Incidents	Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECC) and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG)
Wrecked, Abandoned or Hazardous Vessels	ECCC and CCG

Intra-Provincial Pipeline	BC Energy Regulator (BCER) and Ministry of Mines and Critical Minerals (MCM)
Inter-Provincial Pipeline	Canadian Energy Regulator (CER)

Validate Information

EEB staff verify the report from the ECC by contacting the RP to obtain additional information about the incident and build situational awareness to inform EEB decision making during the response.

Considerations when validating reported information include:

- Reliability of the information source
- Type and quantity of the substance spilled
- Situation status
- Location and the impacted environment
- Current and anticipated response actions

Risk Ranking

Once the information has been validated an Environmental Emergency Response Officer (EERO) undertakes a risk assessment to determine the environmental impact and the field response requirements. The risk ranking assessment considers:

- The risk to human health, infrastructure, and the environment (including substance type and quantity)
- The capability of the RP to respond to the incident effectively

EEB has the authority to deploy provincial resources to the incident site at any time. The risk assessment is continuously updated as the incident evolves, or new information becomes available.

Determine RP Capabilities

EEROs refer to Section 91.2 of EMA which outlines the responsibilities of the RP during a spill to determine the RP response capabilities. EEROs specifically assess the RP's *willingness* and *ability* to respond to the incident and evaluate the capability of the RP to mount an effective response by determining the RP's resources, constraints and knowledge. Additionally, the RP can hire response contractors, known as qualified professionals (QP), to manage a spill incident.

The RP is obligated to develop the response strategy, make operational decisions, and take necessary actions to address the threat or hazard created by the spill. EEB will clearly communicate these

expectations and ensure the RP is given a full opportunity to respond before EEB intervenes in the response, if needed, to achieve a successful outcome.

Using the outcome of the risk ranking and the capability assessment of the RP, EEROs determine the level of provincial involvement required in the response and whether monitoring, augmenting or taking over the incident is required. This assessment is on-going and subject to change throughout the incident.

Determine Level of Response

EEB uses the risk ranking assessment, including RP capabilities, to determine the most appropriate level of provincial response:

Level of Response	Description
Monitoring (regulatory oversight)	Ensuring response is adequate and meets provincial expectations as outlined in EMA. The monitoring function can occur in-person, or at a distance, and may include: • Ensuring the RP is taking necessary actions to manage spill related impacts (EMA 91.2(2)) • Providing clarification about regulatory requirements • Reviewing plans (response, waste management, sampling) • Ensuring appropriate waste disposal and remediation procedures • Continuous Risk Assessment • Ensuring responder safety Although monitoring is a distinct level of response, monitoring (regulatory oversight) occurs throughout all levels.
Augmenting	Provide provincial resources to supplement the response by the RP, federal agencies, Indigenous peoples or local government as needed. This includes activities such as providing technical advice to inform response tactics and guiding RP response actions to meet regulatory requirements.
Taking Over	Assume full response management role in the event the RP is unknown, unwilling, or unable to undertake an adequate response. Any takeover of an incident is done through Section 91.4 of EMA. When taking over a spill response, EEB will enter Unified Command with other agencies, Indigenous peoples, local government and federal partners impacted by the specific incident.

Unified Command (UC) is a management method used to provide a place where the representatives of multiple governments collaboratively manage the response with the RP. UC allows all agencies that have jurisdiction or functional responsibility over the incident to jointly develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies. If required, EEB will assume the role of Provincial Incident Commander within UC to provide provincial representation and collaborate with response partners on the actions to be undertaken and issues requiring a unified decision.

EEB typically engages in UC when augmenting or taking over an incident. EEB is committed to working in UC with federal, provincial, local, and Indigenous partners, each determining their level of involvement. Indigenous peoples are notified of spill incidents and given the opportunity to self-determine their participation.

Response Actions

The specific response actions taken by EEB staff are based on the risk assessment (possible impacts to the environment, human health, or infrastructure) and may include:

- Determining if additional ministry or provincial agency support is required and initiating resource requests
- Liaising with other responding agencies, Indigenous peoples and local governments to gain situational awareness and determine agency roles in an incident
- Determining notification and public information requirements
- Providing advice or direction as the provincial technical specialist for effective environmental emergency response (liaise with the RP, and other regulators)
- Ensuring adequate resources are on site to contain spills or manage imminent risks to the environment through defensive actions (e.g. diking, damming, diverting, plugging)
- Assessing the need for retaining qualified contractors or services
- Determining RP compliance
- Providing guidance to recover/collect/remediate and dispose of spilled materials, including assistance with waste management.

Under Section 52 of the HWR, EEB has delegated authority to issue an exemption to requirements of the HWR for the purpose of managing hazardous waste that originates from an accidental spill, or the abandonment, of dangerous goods.

Notifications

Ensuring that agencies, other levels of government, and impacted communities know about a spill is a key responsibility of EEB. The communication about incidents is described as a referral or notification,

depending on the interest of the party being communicated with. Notifications are communications to interested or impacted communities, agencies or partners.

EEB uses a risk-based approach to trigger notifications to impacted communities, other governments, and partner agencies. Depending on the scale, scope and nature of the incident, EEB staff have discretion to determine what notifications are required.

The Response Section assesses each incident and considers several factors when deciding when and who to notify including:

- Risk of environmental impacts
- Risk to human health
- Risk to Infrastructure
- Media or political interest (potential or actual)
- Interests of the community, government or partner agencies (local authorities may request notifications for certain incidents)
- Capability or capacity of the community, government or partner that could contribute to response
- Direction from EEB Management or Executive

Alertable

Alertable is a subscription-based notification tool used by EEB to quickly inform First Nations that a spill has occurred.

EEB administers Alertable notifications for all reported incidents which geolocates the incident location and sends the notification to subscribed users in the area.

Public Information

EEB shares information with the public for provincially significant spills through the BC Spill Incidents webpage and through social media. The webpage provides summaries of incidents that pose imminent threats or impacts to human health, the environment, or infrastructure, including details on location, scale, cause, response actions, and impacts.

Within EEB's response structure is an Information Officer (IO) who is responsible for gathering the relevant information from the response staff and will disseminate the relevant information to the public. EEB continues to update an incident webpage throughout the response phase. Updates are provided as more information is gathered by the EERO on the scale, cause and response actions from the spill incident.

Web updates conclude when the response phase is nearly complete, or the spill is under control with minimal or no ongoing impact. Updates can be resumed at any time if the incident evolves, and further information is needed.

If multiple response partners are preparing information for public dissemination, EEB will support draft joint messaging, providing a unified message regarding the spill incident.

If UC is established, EEB will seek UC approval for any messaging posted to the spill incident webpage. This applies whether EEB is collaborating on joint messaging with response partners or acting as the sole organization providing public information.

Compliance & Enforcement

EEB will notify the Compliance and Environmental Enforcement Branch (CEEB) if the RP is thought to not be in compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

Emergency Response Completion Date

The Emergency Response Completion Date (ERCD), detailed in Section 8 of the SRR, specifies that once the source of the spill has been controlled and the free product is contained, the response phase is completed. The emergency response phase is complete when the RP has fulfilled their obligation to ensure that the substance has been properly disposed, and emergency response equipment has been demobilized. The ERCD triggers the 30-day timeline for the End of Spill Report (EOSR) to be submitted to ENV. Updates to Minister Reports must be submitted every 30 days or when the RP has reason to believe that information has become outdated, inaccurate or incomplete.

Even though the ERCD criteria have been met, the RP must continue to ensure that the impacts of the spill are properly remediated.

Response Support

Response support includes site support, provincial regional coordination and provincial central coordination. Response support builds from the bottom-up based on the request of the Provincial Incident Commander and direction provided by EEB leadership.

Department Operations Centre

During large, complex or major events where multiple incidents occur simultaneously, EEB will activate the Department Operations Centre (DOC) to provide site-support to field personnel, Government Communications and Public Engagement (GCPE), and senior leadership. EEB can activate the DOC using an in-person, virtual or hybrid model depending on the nature of the incident(s) and the location of resources.

The DOC provides support to site-level incident response and recovery operations by:

- Liaising and coordinating information with other programs, agencies and media
- Disseminating information to the public through the BC Spill Incidents webpage
- Coordinating resources and providing logistical support for deployments to ICP
- Providing strategic direction and policy guidance to inform decision making
- Acting as a link between the incident site and government senior leadership
- Liaising with other programs and ministries within government
- Using a scalable model that is flexible and adaptable to best meet the needs of the incident(s)

The DOC operates on a 1 (routine) to 4 (catastrophic) activation scale (Appendix 6) and is always considered to be activated to a Level 1, with EEB personnel on-call 24/7 to support incident response. Depending on the scope and scale of an incident, EEB may activate the DOC during any response activity (monitoring, augmenting, taking over).

During major incidents, EEB can acquire additional resources, including subject matter experts (SMEs) and equipment, by utilizing established rosters and expedited procurement processes as outlined in the Section 5.01 of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia Procurement Policy. This results in the accelerated deployment of resources to support the DOC and incident site(s), ensuring effective response and recovery actions are promptly implemented.

Spill Recovery

While the response phase of an incident is focused on stabilizing, containing, removing and cleaning up the spilled substance or thing, the goal of the recovery phase of an incident is to restore the environment to as close to pre-incident conditions as possible. It is the RP's legislative responsibility to carry out recovery actions to remove contaminants, manage immediate and long-term impacts, and restore the environment. Spill recovery actions begin during the response phase and extend beyond the ERCD.

EEB Recovery Section is comprised of staff with the skills and expertise to oversee and regulate the recovery actions undertaken by the RP. Recovery is typically involved in supporting and assessing:

- Sampling and environmental monitoring
- Spills to waterways
- Risks to Indigenous cultural and harvesting sites
- Oiled wildlife
- Impacts to fish and fish habitat
- When long-term monitoring or oversight may be necessary

Response staff conduct an initial environmental sensitivity assessment to determine whether EEB Recovery should be engaged based on imminent risk. EEB Recovery is automatically engaged when:

- There is high environmental sensitivity
- There is moderate environmental sensitivity and an imminent risk to human health, infrastructure and/or the environment

The actions undertaken by EEB Recovery are described in a 5-step process (Appendix 5). Although the process appears linear, steps can be revisited once or multiple times depending on each incident.

Environmental Unit

An Environmental Unit (EU) under unified command is responsible for developing plans to assess environmental conditions and impacts related to an incident.

The EU is established during the response phase and plays a critical role by providing scientific-based recommendations that will support the command staff to effectively prevent and address environmental impacts, protect human health and ensure legislative obligations are being met by the RP.

The EU can bring together subject matter experts from government agencies, partners and Indigenous peoples with local knowledge to identify the sensitive resources that could be impacted by the incident. The EU focuses on protecting resources while embedding knowledge about the fate and behaviour of the contaminant into discussions. Following potential impacts, the EU develop plans to support assessment, such as Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Techniques (SCAT) and sampling, and work to identify agreed upon recovery endpoints.

If needed, EEB will assign a representative to the EU. This role is typically filled by Recovery staff; however, if unavailable, EEB will assign personnel from the Response Section to support the EU.

The EU is led by an Environmental Unit Leader (EUL). The role of the EUL will be staffed by a qualified federal, provincial, or First Nations government representative as determined by UC. While the RP may participate within the EU, the EUL will not be filled by a direct or contracted representative of the RP unless directed by UC. EEB may fill the role of the EUL if requested or recommended by response partners.

Cost Recovery

In accordance with the polluter-pay principle, EEB seeks cost recovery from the RP for government expenditures related to spill response actions and management of spills as outlined in Section 91.4 of

EMA. Government's costs include responder time, deployment expenditures, and contracts related to the response and recovery.

Multi-jurisdictional Incidents

EEB will cooperate with and support local, provincial, federal, international agencies, and Indigenous peoples during multi-jurisdictional or trans-boundary spill incidents. Effective preparedness, response, and recovery depend on strong cross-border agreements that enable timely, coordinated action. These agreements ensure clear communication, aligned protocols, and efficient resource sharing when multiple jurisdictions are involved in a spill.

Northern Shelf Bioregion Framework

The Northern Shelf Bioregion Marine Incident Preparedness, Response and Recovery Framework (NSB Framework) was jointly developed by Canada, BC, and the Pacific North Coast First Nations through a Nation-to-Nation, Government-to-Government Initiative under the Reconciliation Framework Agreement for Bioregional Oceans Management and Protection. The framework describes coordinating structures and key roles, responsibilities and commitments for integrating capabilities and applies to all marine incidents, inclusive of potential or actual pollution incidents.

The NSB Framework also establishes principles, guidance and processes for the collaborative development of sub-regional marine incident response plans.

Canada–United States Joint Pollution Contingency Plans

The Canada-United States Joint Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (Marine Plan) and the Canada-United States Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan (Inland Plan) are binational agreements between Canada and the United States (US) that establish coordinated frameworks for responding to marine and inland pollution incidents, including spills, that occur along shared borders.

Together, the Marine and Inland Plans provide the following key elements in support of cross-border spill preparedness and response:

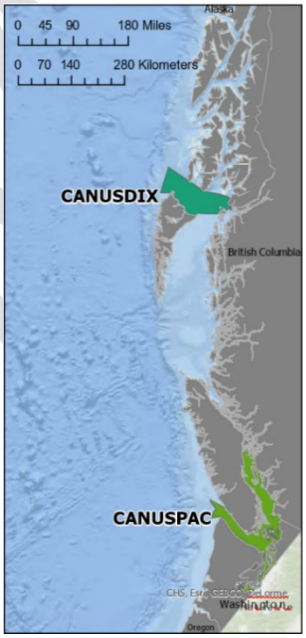
- Cross-border collaboration – EEB is a key Canadian stakeholder in responding to pollution incidents that affect marine and inland environments along the shared BC-US border and coastline.
- Pre-established response protocols – The plans define agreed-upon communication protocols, roles, and responsibilities for Canadian and US agencies, supporting timely, coordinated, and effective joint responses.
- Support for response readiness – The plans promote joint training, exercises, and information sharing, helping EEB maintain preparedness and interoperability with US counterparts.

- Environmental protection focus – EEB's mandate to protect public welfare and the environment during environmental emergencies is strengthened through access to shared resources, specialized expertise, and coordinated response arrangements.

Both the Marine and Inland Plans include regional annexes that address specific geographic areas along the Canada-US border. For BC, the most relevant annexes are described below.

Canada–United States Dixon Entrance Region (CANUSDIX)

The CANUSDIX Annex applies to the remote and environmentally sensitive marine area of the Dixon Entrance, located between northern Haida Gwaii, BC, and southern Alaska. It supports joint planning and coordinated responses to marine pollution incidents in this region, with a strong emphasis on collaboration between the CCG and the US Coast Guard to protect northern coastal ecosystems.



Canada–United States Pacific Region (CANUSPAC)

The CANUSPAC Annex governs joint response operations for marine pollution incidents affecting the shared coastal waters of BC and Washington State. It outlines coordinated procedures between Canadian and U.S. agencies, including notification and communication protocols, joint training and exercises, equipment sharing, and information exchange.

Canada–United States Western Inland Region (CANUSWEST)

The CANUSWEST Annex applies to inland transboundary areas between BC and adjacent US states. While focused on inland environments rather than marine waters, it provides a framework for coordinated planning and response to spills that could affect shared watersheds and cross-border ecosystems through rivers and other inland watercourses.

- CANUSWEST North covers the combined inland boundary of the Yukon Territory and BC with Alaska.
- CANUSWEST South covers the combined inland boundary of BC with Montana, Washington, and Idaho.

Pacific States and British Columbia Oil Spills Task Force

Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska, and British Columbia are active members of the Pacific States and BC Oil Spills Task Force (OSTF), to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to oil spills along the Pacific coastlines. Member jurisdictions of the OSTF are committed to assuring the best achievable response to oil spills in coastal and inland environments, and have a Mutual Aid Agreement to:

- Support requests for government personnel or equipment and support the movement of response contractor personnel
- Support the movement of response contractor personnel and equipment resources

Document Administration

This is an evergreen document that will be reviewed as required, to reflect contemporary practices and changes to jurisdiction, legislation, regulation and internal guidance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Term	Definition
Dangerous Goods	Under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Act, they include substances that pose risks to health, safety, property, or the environment during transportation. These goods are classified into various categories based on their specific hazards, such as explosives, gases, flammable liquids, and toxic substances.
Disaster	A sudden, disruptive event that causes significant harm to people, property, the environment, or essential systems and exceeds the capacity of the affected community or organization to respond using its available resources.
Environment	Air, land, water and all other external conditions or influence under which humans, animals and plants live or are developed. (EMA) **"environment"** includes (a)flora and fauna, and (b)for certainty, animal, fish and plant habitat;
Environmental Emergency	An occurrence or natural disaster that affects the environment and includes a flood, a landslide; and a spill or leakage of oil or of a poisonous or dangerous substance.
First Nation	"first nation government" means (a)the governing body of a band, as defined in the *Indian Act* (Canada), (b)a treaty first nation, (c)a Nisga'a Government, and (d)the council of the shíshálh Nation.
Hazardous waste	In summary, defined as waste that poses a risk to human health or the environment due to its chemical, biological, or physical properties. This includes substances that are toxic, corrosive, flammable, reactive, or infectious. Full definition is found in the Hazardous Waste Regulation.
Incident	A sudden, serious and dangerous event or situation that requires immediate action.
Indigenous Knowledge	Indigenous Knowledge is a unique way of knowing that is held by Indigenous Knowledge holders that pertains to the area within which a spill may occur, including how that spill may interact with the environment and people in the region. Indigenous Knowledge informs spill preparedness, response and recovery decision-making.

Term	Definition
Indigenous peoples	An inclusive, rights-based term that encompasses First Nations, Indigenous Governing Bodies, Métis, and Inuit, and is interpreted in line with Section 35 of the Constitution and UNDRIP, as implemented through DRIPA.
Intersectional Disadvantage	Means the intersection of social categorizations of persons or classes of persons, including Indigenous identity, race, economic status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age and ability, in ways that may result in overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage or disproportionate adverse effects.
Responsible Person	A person who has possession, charge or control of a substance or thing when a spill of the substance or thing occurs or is at imminent risk of occurring (EMA)
Risk	The possibility or likelihood of harm, damage, or negative consequences arising from a hazard, event, or action.
Spill	The introduction into the environment, other than as authorized under EMA and whether intentional or unintentional, of a substance or thing that has the potential to cause adverse effects to the environment, human health or infrastructure

Appendix 2 – Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
BCEMS	British Columbia Emergency Management System
BCER	British Columbia Energy Regulator
CCG	Canadian Coast Guard
CEEB	Compliance and Environmental Enforcement Branch
CER	Canada Energy Regulator
DGIR	Dangerous Goods Incident Report
DM	Duty Manager
DOC	Department Operations Centre
DRIPA	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act
EEB	Environmental Emergency Branch
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EDMA	Emergency and Disaster Management Act
EDMR	Emergency and Disaster Management Regulation
EMA	Environmental Management Act
EMCR	Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
ENV	Ministry of Environment and Parks
ERCD	Emergency Response Completion Date
EU	Environmental Unit
EUL	Environmental Unit Leader
HWR	Hazardous Waste Regulation
ICS	Incident Command System
MCM	Ministry of Mines and Critical Minerals
MEA	Ministry of Environment Act
NSB	Northern Shelf Bioregion
OSTF	Pacific States and BC Oil Spills Task Force
QP	Qualified Professional
RP	Responsible Person
SCAT	Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique
SCRP	Spill Contingency Planning Regulation
SPRR	Spill Preparedness, Response and Recovery Regulation

SRR	Spill Reporting Regulation
UC	Unified Command
US	United States
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People

Appendix 3 – Actions Conducted During Response Phase

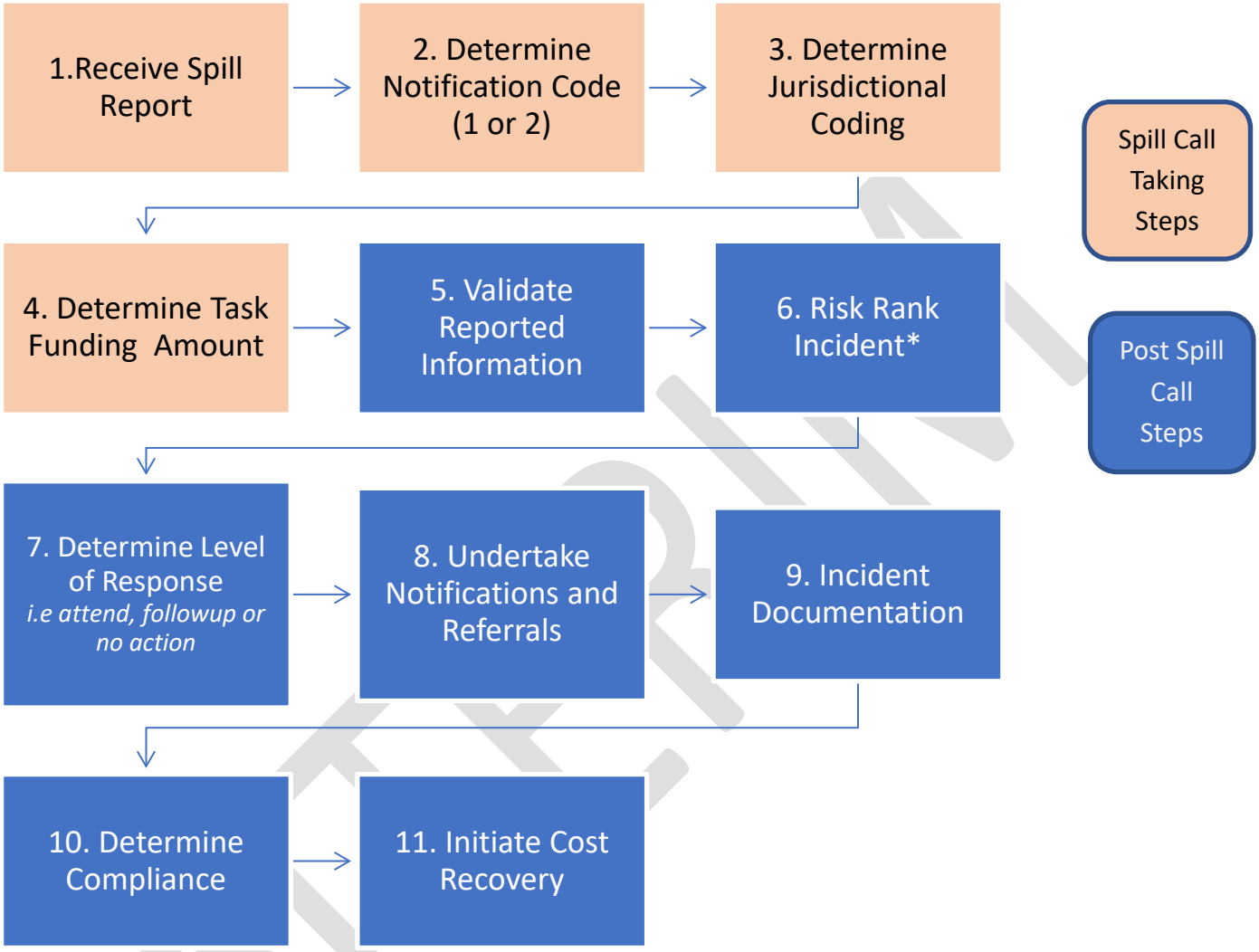
Action	Description

Staff Deployment	• Personnel may be deployed to:
	  ○ Verify that the RP is meeting legislative and regulatory obligations for spills response and recovery (regulatory oversight)
	  ○ Represent the Province in the ICP or UC
	  ○ Support the EU
	  ○ Fulfill ICS roles in the DOC
	• Support any of the technical activities identified in this table

Public Safety Notifications	• Technical assessment support to draft alerts and notifications • Coordination of scientific support to inform the messaging (federal, provincial and local governments, international resources) • Coordination of First Nations' traditional knowledge to inform messaging
Water Course, Drinking Water and Wastewater System Restoration	• Water quality assessment • Rapid assessment and repair of damaged systems • Deployment of lab support resources and technical assistance teams (sampling assessment, analysis, lab resources) • Distribution of clean drinking water and temporary treatment systems
Household Hazardous Waste Collection	• Removal of hazardous materials from homes and businesses • Safe disposal of chemicals, batteries, paints, and e-waste
Debris Management	• Assessment of debris impacts related to recovery • Develop and implement debris management recovery plans and strategies to address impacts on public health and safety as well as the environment • Technical support for segregation and disposal of debris • Technical support for recycling and hazardous waste sorting at temporary debris sites
Air Quality Monitoring and Assessment	• Support for real-time monitoring of toxic releases (e.g., from chemical fires or spills) • Scientific support teams and technical support for sensor equipment. (NASP, ECCC, drones, ENV and contractor technical specialists) • Gather information for public safety decisions to inform notifications and alerts

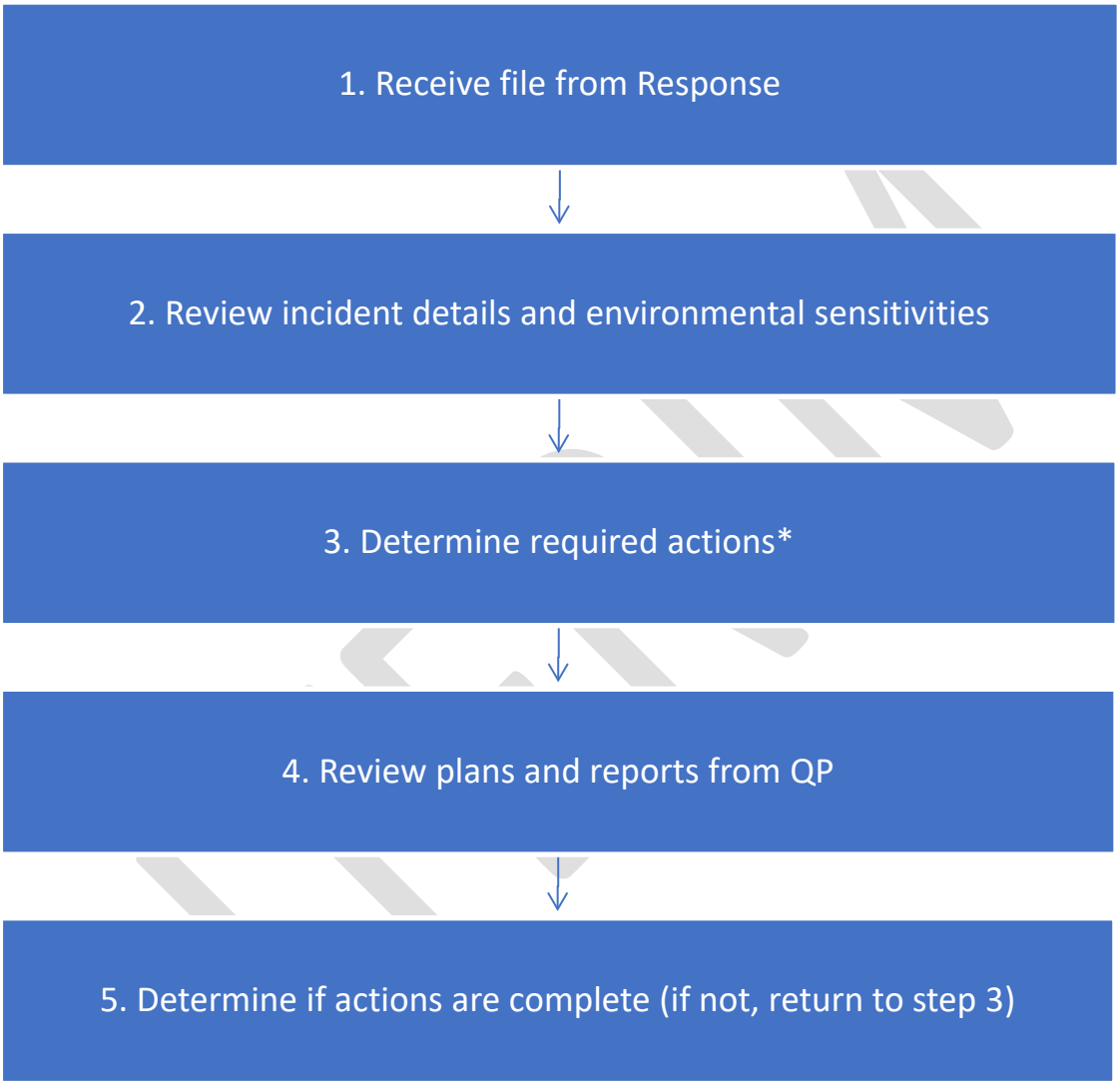
Action	Description
Soil and Sediment Sampling Assessment	• Rapid testing for contamination in flood-affected or spill-impacted areas • Immediate remediation of hotspots to prevent spread
Public Health Risk Communication	• Support for issuing advisories on boil water notices, air quality, and chemical exposure • Community outreach and coordination with local health authorities and departments
Temporary Waste Storage and Staging	• Support for establishing safe zones for temporary storage of contaminated materials • Coordinating with EMCR and local agencies for final disposal
Technical Assistance to Utilities	• On-site engineering support for restarting critical infrastructure • Help with regulatory compliance and emergency permitting
Environmental Sampling Assessment and Mapping	• GIS-based mapping of contamination zones • Sharing data with local and federal partners for coordinated recovery
Support to Vulnerable Communities	• Support for prioritizing response in overburdened or underserved areas • Ensuring equitable access to recovery resources
Communication with EMCR and Other Agencies	• Joint field operations and unified command structures • Streamlining permitting and cleanup approvals

Appendix 4 – Spill Response Steps



*Indicates the step that the EEB Recovery Section may be engaged.

Appendix 5 – Spill Recovery Steps



*Indicates the step where recovery is closed out, if no further actions are needed.

Appendix 6 – DOC Activation Levels

DOC Activation Level	Description
1	• Daily operations • Duty Manager may request assistance from any DOC positions
2	• Modified operations and additional site-support required • Moderate size incident or multiple smaller incidents • DOC sections activated as required
3	• Large incident with widespread impacts • Multiple incidents • Multiple staff activated under one or more rostered DOC positions • External support from Subject Matter Experts (SME) • May utilize provincial, national and/or international agreements
4	• Catastrophic response actions (e.g. earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.) outside EEB's normal response processes • Extensive resources/support required • Require external support from SMEs and other agencies • Activation of provincial, national and/or international agreements

Appendix 7 – Resources

B.C Guidelines for Industry Emergency Response Plans

Responsible Person Guidance

Responsible Person Fact Sheet

Spill Reporting Fact Sheet

Cost Recovery Fact Sheet

Spill Regulations and Additional Resources

Dealing with Contaminant Migration

Water Sheen Fact Sheet

Unified Command for Spill Response