

RECOMMENDATIONS

All of the discussion in this paper is concerned with improving spill response performance. Over the past 30 years, the number of people involved in spill response has grown; the process of response has become more complex; and the criteria by which response performance can be assessed are confusing. Specific factors that promote or impede performance during preparedness and response activities are identified to clarify major areas needing attention. Factors that promote performance improvement include streamlined management, spill experts as decision makers, and effective communications. Assessment can improve performance by providing a scale by which to judge. Stakeholder involvement in evaluation or decision making is increasing in many areas of the world, so information is presented on how best to involve stakeholders and incorporate their concerns into the planning process. Lastly, a conceptual model is presented as a means to involve stakeholders in adopting criteria and a foundation against which response performance can be measured and improvements made. The model can be used by the response community in consultation with all stakeholders or, in special cases, by an independent panel.

From this review, two broad recommendations are made to challenge the response community to improve response performance worldwide:

- use stakeholder process to establish response criteria and standards; and
- use a systematic approach to assess performance.

6.1 USE STAKEHOLDER PROCESS TO ESTABLISH RESPONSE CRITERIA AND STANDARDS

The current dilemma of response judgments predominantly being made by those external to planning and response needs to be resolved. The most direct albeit labor-intensive way is to incorporate stakeholders' concerns via consultation with them to determine criteria that must be addressed during spill planning and response, as discussed in Section 5.2. Each stakeholder has performance criteria considered important during

spill response. By engaging stakeholders, consensus can be sought; compromises can be attempted; and criteria can be adjusted to resolve any remaining conflicts. Response priorities, strategies, and tactics can be modified based on stakeholder input.

Bringing stakeholders together, along with their competing perspectives, to evaluate spill performance can be a challenge. In the absence of a spill emergency, issues may not generate stakeholder involvement, and cultural differences may not encourage or allow such involvement. Nonetheless, when possible, it is vitally important that this occur systematically so that performance can be evaluated and improved. Involving stakeholders in the initial stages of contingency planning can significantly improve the ability of a response organization to plan and prepare.

Stakeholder involvement also improves communications. The response organization better understands the concerns of stakeholders and can take them into account during contingency planning, further improving communications and ultimately improving performance.

6.2 USE A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO ASSESS PERFORMANCE

The use of the systematic response performance assessment process as described in Figure 4 is recommended. This process encourages stakeholder participation in the establishment of specific performance criteria (Phase 1) for spill response. These criteria form the reference points from which goals and strategies are developed in contingency plans (Phase 2). Development of specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented goals will enable a response organization to better manage spill response and measure improvement (Phase 3). Additionally, goals enable a response organization and stakeholders to track performance during exercises and response to adjust performance criteria and strategies in contingency plans (Phase 4). This continuous process should result in improved relations and increased preparation for response.