

**Mutual Interests, Mutual Training, Results in Mutual Aid and Respect****Author : Edward J Wieliczkievicz****BP Exploration Alaska****ABSTRACT 300095:**

In a crisis situation responders from different organizations may find each other's priorities and goals in conflict. By training to a common standard, we create an environment where adversarial conflicts are replaced with open discussions. We may disagree on the path, but in the end it is in everyone's best interest to have a common, well understood goal. After 2010, it became apparent to me that agencies and industry did not always share a common understanding of the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The result would be conflicting agendas, potential mistrust and a perception that responders did not have control of the emergency.

This paper will describe the method that Alaska's North Slope responders used in 2012 to extend the practice of spill response teams training together to the Incident Management Teams and the benefits that resulted from this approach. Our goal was to strengthen the response posture of Alaska's North Slope through an aggressive training program involving multiple industry and agency partners in a year-long series of classroom and field opportunities, working together as members of the same team. A common national curriculum delivered by a team of certified instructors allowed participants to develop or reinforce a common understanding of the NIMS based principles and processes. At the end, teams would participate in a 3 day long field exercise (using a scenario they had never seen before) involving responder and equipment deployment based on plans developed by the Unified Command. Rarely does a training product actually end up as a plan implemented in the field. Because the scenario was not rehearsed, this reality check ensured everyone took their duties seriously. Responders would implement tactics, request and expect supplies, and the consequences of the team's actions would result in a success, or failure, that could affect the reputation of all the parties involved.

Program participants included personnel from six oil companies (including UK based personnel), U.S Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, State of Alaska, North Slope Borough, Alaska Cleans Seas and a myriad of North Slope Spill Response Team.

Key benefits included a common understanding of NIMS ICS at all levels, building relationships, a mentoring environment allowing inexperienced participants to build competency and expertise, and meeting portions of contingency plan readiness requirements.

The program helped reinforce Alaska's North Slope responder's reputation for world class response capability.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Every year the oil producers on Alaska's North Slope take part in a mutual aid drill and companies take turns hosting the event. While this gives us the opportunity to have our spill response teams train together, it does not normally extend to the incident management teams. This paper will describe the method we used in 2012 to extend the practice of spill response teams training together to the Incident Management Teams and the benefits that resulted from this approach.

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One of our responsibilities as a company is to ensure we are prepared to respond to an emergency. I do this by following the guidance I received when I arrived in 2001- “If we can’t do it, it doesn’t go in the plan.” It applies to my spill responders and the incident management teams they work with, and forms the basis for our approach to training and drills. The results must be agreed upon, documented and *repeatable*.

### The Reason

In 2008 I participated in a joint industry/agency drill as part of the Operations Section. Based on my experience, I wanted to employ a tactic not listed in the plan, but the response from the Pacific Northwest state representative was “you can do that, but you’ll have to change your plan...” In 2010 at one of the Gulf command posts I observed multiple agencies wearing Incident Commander vests employing their own understanding of the Incident Command System, which was different than mine. In 2011 I was the Operations Section Chief for an exercise in Prince William Sound; during my first meeting with the Unified Command I asked for and received clarity on my boundaries – I was told we are unified and the best qualified personnel for the job, does the job. As a result I had deputies from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the United States Coast Guard.

As I approached my time to lead the 2012 Mutual Aid Drill (MAD) I wanted to reaffirm the commitment to “If we can’t do it, it doesn’t go in the plan” and continue following the guidance of Homeland Security Presidential Directive No. 5, issued by President Bush in 2003. This directive was intended to improve management of domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive national incident management system.

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly... respond to... the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and harm to the environment.

### THE OVERALL 2012 EXERCISE PROGRAM:

The 2012 North Slope Mutual Aid Drill was designed as a learning experience for all participants in the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) and its application on the North Slope as well as other areas in Alaska. The intent was to coach and mentor individuals, and identify areas where improvements could be made. The drill fully tested an Incident Management Team operating under a Unified Command while exercising existing plans, handbooks, agreements and response organizations. It was intended to be the highlight of a 12 month program of continuous improvement in emergency response as depicted in the timeline below.

|                         |  |                                 |                                      |  |                  |                  |                  |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Scenario<br>Development | Program Outline and<br>Internal Review | Presentation to<br>Participants | Joint Attendance at<br>Classes Begin | Initial Field Exercise<br>Date (Delayed) | Classes Continue | Mutual Aid Drill | Classes Continue |
| Father's Day 2011       | Fall 2011                              | January 2012                    | February 2012                        | June 6, 2012                             |                  | August 2012      | To End of 2013   |

The goal was to strengthen the response posture of the North Slope by an aggressive agency and industry training program:

- Building interagency and industry relationships through joint training.

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- Adhering to the standard NIMS training curriculum to allow for a common understanding of Incident Command System principles and process.
- Expanding ICS knowledge at all levels of participation (Incident Command Post and tactical field personnel).
- Offering a mentoring environment that allows participants to combine knowledge with practical application to strengthen the response capability of all.
- Meeting portions of the NPREP requirements for a 3-year exercise of the Milne Point Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan.
- Allowing agencies and industry to build competency and expertise among currently inexperienced personnel to strengthen their future response roles (i.e. every session, even the last one, is a training opportunity focused on learning and building future responder success)

### **MAD Scenario Preparation**

Most exercises revolve around a scenario that was developed and scripted by the training team or contingency planners. Forms and timelines are usually neatly printed, well organized and events follow a clearly defined sequence dictated by the company's contingency plan. Yet, during an exercise participants sometimes question the credibility of the information they are given. Many times I've heard the phrase "this would never happen." To remove this artefact, an unscripted equipment deployment exercise took place on June 18, 2011 (the "Father's Day Drill"). The response and incident management teams were called out to respond to a pipeline leak; and the only information they received as time went on were a set of benzene readings and trajectories for the oil on the water. They were instructed NOT to refer to the contingency plan in the response, instead they were to react and deploy/request equipment based on what they felt were the most appropriate tactics for the real time weather, water flow and tundra conditions. Incident logs were consolidated and the documents created by the on scene and incident command post retained for training purposes.

The IMT was instructed to stay in the response support mode and not to begin a planning cycle. That would come during the Mutual Aid Drill schedule to happen the following year. The scenario was not discussed again until the drill. These field produced items were used as the input for the 2012 scenario.

### **The Training Component of the Exercise Program**

An extensive training program formed part of the overall exercise program. Classes in this program were held throughout the year. The goal was to develop an environment where students focused on the Incident Command System (ICS) process, rather than create a response. The training program extended over a twelve month time frame in order to allow several opportunities for the participants to train with each other. It was also important to continue training after the exercise was over. This was intended to send the message that learning is a continuous process; it doesn't stop at the exercise. We had participants from several state and federal agencies, the industry partners, as well as from BP's offices in Houston and the United Kingdom.

During the classes, third party instructors created student teams to reduce the opportunity for "cliques" to form, thereby encouraging agency and industry relationships. To do this dates and locations were flexible; classes were held in Anchorage or on the North Slope, and were

open to response agencies and members of Alaska Clean Seas (ACS), the Oil Spill Removal Organization that serves the North Slope oil producers.

I viewed the use of third party instructors as critical. While an organization or agency may have qualified instructors, I believe that until the relationship among the students is formed there may be a tendency to view the training presentation as biased, i.e. “they are teaching the Company XYZ version of ICS.” Recognized professionals can help alleviate this concern.

During 2012 North Slope IMT personnel attended over 4000 man-hours of response related training – but it’s important to note that not all of these personnel were going to be involved in the MAD; the program was that far reaching. At the same time the BPXA’s spill response team members participated in just under 13,000 man-hours of their training (a slight increase from 2011 hours). ICS topics included ICS-300, All Hazards Planning and Operations Section Chief, Resource or Situation Unit Leader, Incident Commander (All Hazards), Safety Officer and ICS-320 (Intermediate Incident Management Team). A description of the major courses can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Scheduling the Mutual Aid Drill**

Dates for the drill were influenced by several factors. Normally MAD activities take place with a travel day, drill day and then debrief travel day. The three days needed for this event presented its own set of challenges; the largest of which was getting agency personnel to commit for a week (including travel time) while using personnel from an operating oil production facility.

It was originally scheduled for early June to minimize the impact from the spring or fall whaling seasons, facility turnarounds (major maintenance), North Slope work schedules and restrictions on agency travel. However, weather in early June can still be problematic on the North Slope and rising flood waters combined with one airport being closed and the other under major renovation to create the real possibility of having agency personnel “stranded” in an area with minimal transportation options. When asked how we would deal with this situation if it had been a “real” spill the answer is always simple. Our priorities are always the safety of people and the environment – maintenance would have been rescheduled and workers sent home. Risk management of the conditions resulted in the exercise being moved to later in the summer when the weather would be more stable and predictable.

Days of the week are just as important as seasons of the year- one had to consider restrictions placed on state and federal agencies:

- Agency representatives normally cannot attend weekend training sessions.
- A mid-morning start allows slope based students to get work crews underway before attending
- This start time also allowed non-slope students to arrive in Deadhorse and then make the 90 minute bus trip to Milne Point, the training location.

**THE MUTUAL AID DRILL:**

The exercise took the form of an ICS-320 (Intermediate Incident Management Team) course. It allowed students an opportunity to put into practice the skills they had been taught over the last several months, while still learning in a safe environment. The key differences between the way this class and others have been presented were:

- 1) The scenario used for teaching was the result of the Father's Day drill the previous year, not a classroom generated production. This includes the documents, timeline and material requests.
- 2) The students would be creating the Incident Action Plan (IAP) that would be implemented on the field deployment day. There was no scripted response, the responders found out the tactics they would be implementing when they received the plan to implement.
- 3) No equipment was pre-staged or pre-deployed. Responders would only be able to use equipment that had been ordered by the IMT.
- 4) Tundra conditions, water flow and the ability to isolate the spill location, made it highly improbable that the oil would escape the initial location. In order to increase the geographic and organizational complexity a second incident ("the creek") was created that involved a sheen occurring in a nearby stream from an unknown source. The scenario for this second leak was unclear in order to require the IMT to focus on cleaning it up and not on stopping it.

The requirement that they develop the IAP, obtain resources, provide support to the 60+ responders in the field, react to real time events and then, at the same time, to develop a second IAP created as realistic a training environment as possible. Knowing that the IAP they were developing was actually going to be implemented increased the pressure on the team to have a complete and accurate product.

The ICS-320 class is a three day event. On Day 1 and Day 2 the students slow down time and work through the processes associated with the first 12 hours of a response. On training Day 3 they return to actual time and develop the IAP for the Next Operating Period.

The ICS-320 team focused on the functions of Command, Command Staff, General Staff, Situation Unit leader, Resources Unit Leader and Documentation Unit Leader in the planning process. It reviewed functional responsibilities and what each position contributes to the development of an Incident Action Plan. Students practiced learning points with a scenario that ran the length of the course. The training outline used is found in Table 1.

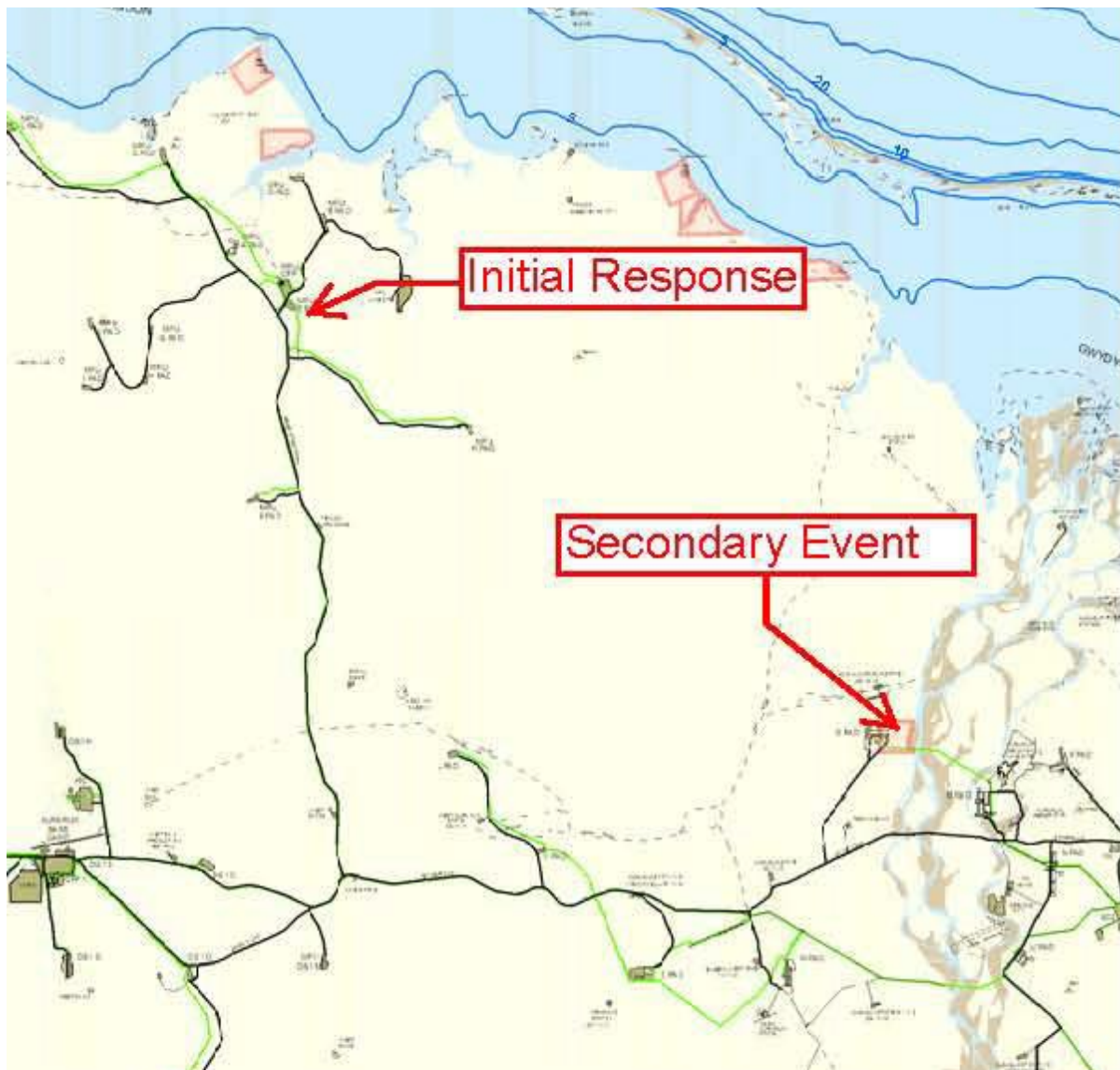
**Weather and Location**

Weather did not impact the location of drill activities. While personnel were prepared to react to weather of the day, the clear skies and low winds allowed the deployment of tactics in the selected areas within equipment operating parameters. Please see Appendix 2 for a partial list of tactics actually deployed from the Incident Action Plan of August 24, 2013.

Classes were held in the Milne Point gym and nearby meeting rooms. However, the field deployment was expanded from the appearance of the second sheen, requiring it to take place in two locations: the Milne Point "Y" intersection and 19 KM away at the confluence of Smith Creek and the Kupuruk River. A positive outcome from responding to the second sheen was an additional demonstration of resources and the IMT's command/control ability.

**Table 1. ICS-320 (Intermediate Incident Management Team) Outline**

|                                     | <b>Day 1</b>  | <b>Day 2</b>   | <b>Day 3</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Operational Period                  | First   | First  | Second   |
| Response Hours                      | 0-6   | 6-12   | 12-24  |
| Scenario                            | Father's Day Drill<br>June 19, 2011   | Father's Day Drill<br>June 19, 2011  | IAP for Operational Period 2 as developed by students to be implemented by the field response (real time)  |
| Field Response                      | None  | None   | MAD Personnel  |
| Objectives                          | Classroom<br>Classroom<br>201 Briefing<br>Unified Command<br>Interim Direction<br>External Influences<br>Command Guidance<br>Section Workshop<br>Command and<br>General Staff Meeting | Classroom<br>Section<br>Workshops<br>Planning Meeting<br>Operations<br>Briefing<br>Managing<br>Ongoing<br>Operations | - Develop OP3 IAP<br>- Support Field Response<br>- Respond to issues raised during previous classes or by drill participants   |
| Injects                             | Actions or questions generated during the Father's Day Drill June 19, 2011  | Actions or questions from the Father's Day Drill June 19, 2011   | Issues raised during training classes held before the drill. Introduction of a second spill that required response activity.   |
| Evaluation Criteria                 | NIMS Standard<br>Course Objectives  | NIMS Standard<br>Course<br>Objectives  | IMT - EMSI developed Command and General staff evaluation criteria based on Department of Homeland Security Standard (Universal Task List)<br>Field - ACS developed field deployment criteria based on the standards for tactic deployment and an evaluation of on-site conditions |
| Evaluation Team Membership Criteria | EMSI Instructors and students   | EMSI Instructors and students  | Command and General Staff - ICS-300 minimum<br>Field Deployment - Attendance at evaluator orientation to tactics and criteria, HAZWOPER  |



### Evaluators

Each evaluator was assigned to a functional team with a leader who coordinated their activities. The teams were made up of a mixture of industry and agency personnel in order to ensure the results were “agreed upon, documented and *repeatable*” in an impartial manner.

Table 2 shows the makeup of the teams that were used. All evaluators captured their evaluations remarks, observations and insights in an Exercise Handbook which was returned to the leader at the conclusion of the exercise. Please note that Evaluators only completed those portions of the handbook that they were assigned to or actually observed. As this was a learning experience for most people, evaluators were encouraged to coach and mentor participants as appropriate since a related goal of the program was to promote improvement.



**Table 2 - Evaluation and Drill Control Team Make up**

|          | Command Staff    | General Staff    | Control Team | Field Deployment   |
|----------|------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Lead     | Instructor Staff | Instructor Staff | BPXA         | ACS Operations Mgr |
| Federal  | EPA              | USCG             | USCG or EPA  | USCG and EPA       |
| State    | ADEC             | ADEC             | ADEC         | ADEC x 2           |
| Local    | NSB              | NSB              | NSB          | NSB x 2            |
| Industry | BPXA             | ACS              | CPAI         | CPAI and BPXA      |

### Field Deployment Day Participants

Incident Command Post participants were supposed to be limited to industry and agency representatives that would be expected on site between hours 12-24 on a weekend. The expectation was that by limiting the size of the team, additional space would be available for coaches to assist and mentor the participants.

The August ICS-320 was expected to have up to 35 people during the first two days. These were to be the industry's IMT and the agency responders that would arrive during the initial six hours. An unanticipated impact from the success of the program was that close to 50 students arrived for the first two days as unregistered agency and industry personnel sought to take advantage of the learning opportunity.





Day 3 expanded to allow additional personnel to participate in the exercise. They were integrated into the response in a real time manner. During all training sessions (including drill day) coaches from agency or industry were able to help students as needed. Teams did not have to bring their most skilled personnel as long as the person was willing to train and participate in the drill.

### **Anticipated Minimum Participation**

It was expected that approximately 120 personnel **would** be involved on the day of the field deployment exercise, the actual number in the command post and the field brought it closer to 140 participants.

- NSSRT and other responders – approximately 75
- Milne Point and other BP Exploration Alaska Incident Management Team personnel, Alaska Clean Seas, Federal, State and Local Agencies – initially at 50 then expanded to approximately 65 including personnel integrated within the response organization and evaluation teams.



### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

In 2012, over 450 students took part in an extensive series of classroom training programs that ranged from basic Incident Command System (ICS-100) to the highlight, a MAD in the form of an ICS-320 Intermediate Incident Management Team course (with field deployment). The program continued into December with additional courses on Intermediate ICS and position specific as well as team training.

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Program participants during the period included personnel from the following organizations: BP Exploration Alaska, ConocoPhillips, Pioneer, ENI, U.S Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, State of Alaska, BP Houston, BP London, North Slope Borough, South Central Alaska Native Health Foundation, Alyeska, Alaska Cleans Seas and a myriad of North Slope Spill Response Team personnel from ACS member companies and the contractors that support them. In addition, BP Exploration Alaska was able to help support the local NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator with obtaining a Science of Oil Spill course in Anchorage, Alaska – the first in almost eight years.

Our goal was to strengthen the response posture of Alaska’s North Slope through an aggressive training program involving multiple industry and agency partners in a year-long series of classroom and field opportunities, working together as members of the same team.

The goal of the training program was met and exceeded all expectations. In the words of the federal agency personnel that attended the field exercise

“You have set the bar to a new height... Great training opportunity. Multiple organizations were allowed to come together as a team to successfully accomplish a common goal. The basic precepts of the ICS were successfully taught and displayed by the course participants. Course participants were allowed to tackle realistic scenarios and struggle with complex challenges. Growth could be clearly seen throughout the course of the exercise.” – Matt Carr/EPA FOSC

“It was good to see people with little experience filling the key positions and running the response. Utilizing as much realism as possible in an exercise is a good thing. I was happy to see this level of realism that was there.” – LT Kion Evans/USCG FOSC & Evaluator

## Appendix 1 – Course Descriptions

### ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System

This course provides an in-depth focus on the NIMS Incident Command System that includes all of the tools, practices and procedures that are available in ICS to effectively manage emergency incidents or planned events at a local Type 3 level. It ensures that students understand the basic concepts that allow an incident management organization to expand as needed to fit the incident and maintain its operational effectiveness.

### ICS-310 Intermediate Incident Commander

Upon completion of the course, the student will have demonstrated the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the duties and responsibilities of an Incident Commander in the NIMS Incident Command System at the Type 3 level.

### ICS-320 Intermediate Incident Management Team

This course focuses on the functions of Command, Command Staff, General Staff, Situation Unit Leader, Resources Unit Leader and Documentation Unit Leader in the planning process. It reviews functional responsibilities and what each contributes to the development of an Incident Action Plan. Students practice learning points with a scenario based exercise that runs the length of the course.

### ICS-404 Safety Officer

This course primarily focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the Safety Officer assigned to an all-hazard Incident Management Team. It is designed to enhance and exercise the students' knowledge of how to perform their duties within the framework of NIMS ICS. This course is exercise intensive and provides students the opportunity to demonstrate the skills necessary to be an effective Safety Officer during an all-hazard response.

## Appendix 2 – Partial List of Tactics Employed

- Establish and manage an operational Staging Area at river's edge with airboats, warm up trailers, 4000 feet of river boom, Mega-Dam, 500 gallon fuel tank, IT 12 Loader, traffic control, shelters, helipad, skimmers, "comfort stations", and wildlife hazing equipment.
- Establish an operations Staging Area at tundra's edge with Jon Boats, 1700 feet of river boom, 700 feet of Shore Seal boom, "comfort stations", warm up trailer, mechanic support and skid steer.
- At tundra pond – deploy and maintain containment and Shore Seal boom, deploy portable skimmers and power packs, direct suction to vacuum trucks and fast tanks; deploy temporary storage to facilitate oil recovery operations; deploy decontamination equipment
- Deploy three Wildlife Task Forces to haze, capture and rehabilitate affected wildlife (note – during the 2011 Father's Day Exercise the wildlife crews were actively involved monitoring grizzly bears in the area)
- Provide secure site control and evidence collection.

### Appendix 3 – Selected Comments From Participants

The comments in this section were garnered from the participants, observers and evaluators. While no exercise can be without critiques, these are meant to highlight the successes and concerns of the exercise day.

- “Team members asked for additional training/mini-exercises to stay sharp. Give it to them in an uncomplicated way. Continue this program of training. It should be the model for all north slope spill clean-up operations.”
- “UC established tasks to develop several operating procedures: Limitations and Constraints, reporting Thresholds, Documentation Requirements, Demobilization Process, ICS-213RR Process, Code of Conduct.”
- - “The use of actual field operations mixed with the ICS-320 Course added a level of seriousness and reality to the drill that has been lacking in previous training exercises.”
- “ADEC, NSB and the USCG were amazing and contributed to the overall success of the drill. They challenged the BP team to ensure greater reliability by asking questions and also ensuring that all permits and forms were completed properly. This added greater reality and value to the drill.”
- “The 320 workshops format drove some great discussions about how to “agree to disagree” and was exercised when two UC members did not agree on the name ”
- “Not using the software improved the teams understanding of the *basics* of the forms and processes instead of relying on the software to carry them through.”
- “Significant discussion on the political realities the UC would face. Especially valuable was the federal agency perspective.”
- “Well organized, received a better understanding of the training that is essential to an effective exercise.”