



Every second counts

When oil or hazardous waste spills occur, response time is critical. The faster official responders arrive, the better the chances of minimizing environmental damage and potential health impacts. DEQ emergency operations staff play a crucial role in assessing potential impacts and, more importantly, taking action to control the spill and begin clean-up work.

Trained for speed

DEQ emergency responders are trained and prepared for rapid deployment, interagency cooperation, on-scene coordination, and safe, effective clean-up operations. We operate with a 24/7 mentality, knowing that spills can happen anywhere, anytime. Each year we receive about 1,000 to 2,000 reports of spills, big and small. We measure success by the timeliness of initial response, and how quickly we can begin the clean-up or mitigation process when needed.

How we work

DEQ's Emergency Response Program consists of 10 full-time and one half-time staff. We augment the team with staff from other programs who respond to after-hours and weekend events. Two people are always on duty, and an Emergency Response coordination cell line provides additional support to our after-hour duty officers. Each of our

three regions is assigned an on-scene coordinator who travel to sites of significant spills and monitor other incidents through contact with the responsible party and other responders.

Prevention and preparation

The best spill is the one that doesn't happen. That's why we monitor potential hazards to ensure the responsible parties follow appropriate and up-to-date safety measures. But we also know that not all spills can be prevented, and we have to be prepared. We conduct drills and contingency planning to address – and avoid – worst case scenarios. The risks are significant. If a spill were to occur on the Columbia River, for example, currents and tidal flux within Oregon's estuaries would cause oil to spread rapidly unless it was quickly contained. A wide variety of sensitive aquatic life, waterfowl and fragile habitat could be seriously damaged.

Need for sufficient resources

DEQ's Emergency Response Program provides for a flexible, efficient use of our resources to protect human health and the environment. Yet, the level of available resources is not sufficient to address significant spills requiring a sustained incident management team, or provide support for local disaster response coordination. Investing in this critical program will make Oregon safer, healthier and cleaner.

DEQ's mission is to be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water.

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Spills in Oregon by County (Fiscal Year 2019)

