
Central Texas Coastal
Area Contingency Plan
(CTCACP)

Environmental Health Support During
Emergency Response

Annex 5
May 2022

Record of Changes

Change Number	Change Description	Section Number	Change Date	Name
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1000 Introduction

When a disaster event occurs within the environment, to include a significant oil discharge, chemical/hazardous substance release, explosion or fire that impacts the health of the community or has the potential to impact the health of the community from contaminants, it is critical that Unified Command identify and incorporate the local health authority within the command structure.

In most States, the public health authority is the State Health Department or its designee. Unique to coastal Regional Response Team 6, Texas is identified as a “home rule” state, meaning, the local health authority is the lead during a response event. The local health authority has the ability to invite the State Health Authority and/or Federal Health Agencies for support. As such, it’s important to identify the “local health authority” that’s responsible for providing environmental health support to the impacted citizens in their tribal community, parish, county, or city. As previously mentioned, each State has a designated “State Health Authority” that can also play a vital role in environmental health support to its citizens. In order to involve the State Health Authority in an incident in a “home rule” state, the local health authority *must* request assistance from the State Health Authority. This invitation to include the State Health Authority may or may not occur depending on the size and scope of the incident.

During the initial emergency phase of a pollution incident, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) or designated representative should contact the [Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222](tel:800-222-1222) to discuss/receive initial environmental health support. The FOSC should provide the Poison Control Center (PCC) with any information related to the event (hazard information, product spilled, quantity spilled, Safety Data Sheet, certificate of analysis, impacted media, location of event, occupational impacts, community impacts). When the PCC is actively engaged, they can produce a Situation Report on calls received and guidance to the community to include hospitals, the media, clinicians and health authorities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes the Poison Control Centers as a public health authority. **Note:** 911 call centers transfer any environmental health calls directly to the Poison Control Center.

Please see below links to local and state health authorities for TX.

- **Link to local health authorities for Texas coast:** <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/default.shtm>
- **State health authority for Texas:** <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/contact.shtm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) headquarters are in Atlanta, GA. The two Centers within the CDC that would be most closely involved in oil pollution events would be the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). NIOSH may also become involved in an incident at the request of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

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The ATSDR has Regional Offices located within each of the 10 EPA Regional Offices. Staffing consists of a Regional Director and several Regional Representatives. The ATSDR is the lead federal health agency for chemical spills. The ATSDR can provide consultation to the FOSC (EPA/U.S. Coast Guard) on-site, by phone or through email. Because the ATSDR has relationships with the State Health Departments, they can support inclusion within Unified Command. The ATSDR can provide technical review of data and coordination and collaboration with both the State health agencies and local health authority. The ATSDR can also directly collaborate with the Poison Control Centers.

Both CDC and ATSDR can coordinate with other federal health agencies mentioned in the National Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300.175) as necessary. Both agencies can provide environmental health support to the FOSC during an emergency response incident to include:

- 1) Technical assistance in the environmental health and toxicology areas of the response and recovery phase of the incident
- 2) Analysis/evaluation of the human health implications of environmental data
- 3) Public Health Messaging
- 4) Coordination with Poison Control Centers
- 5) Coordination with State, Local, Territorial, and Tribal (SLTT) public health authorities
- 6) Information for healthcare providers on the substances involved
- 7) Assistance with response worker health and safety issues
- 8) In person press conference support

2000 Notifications

- **Primary / Initial: Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222**
- Local Health Authority: Specific to each COTP zone
- State Health Authority: Specific to TX

3000 Federal support under the NCP

The CDC Emergency Operations Center is staffed 24/7 and can be reached at: 770-488-7100 or Email: eocreport@cdc.gov

- Primary agency for oil (CDC/NCEH)
- Primary agency for hazardous substances (ATSDR)

Ask the CDC Watch Stander to connect you with the ATSDR or NCEH Duty Officer.

Although environmental health support can be provided remotely, the USCG FOSC has the option to request on site CDC and/or ATSDR presence. This request is formalized via a Pollution Removal Funding Authorization (PRFA). This option was most recently executed during the Bayport Channel Collision incident in Sector Houston-Galveston in May 2019. The primary CDC team role included inviting the local health authority, State Health Authority, review of environmental data, public messaging, and collaboration with the Poison Control Center.

4000 States Specific Notes:

4100 Texas

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has a central office in Austin, TX. During the initial emergency phase of a pollution incident, the FOSC or designated representative should notify the DSHS Environmental Epidemiology and Disease Registries Section, as well as the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Section. DSHS central office works closely with local health authorities and the Texas Poison Center Network and can assist with identification of and communication with appropriate entities.

Contact information (M-F 8:00AM to 5:00PM):

- Environmental Epidemiology and Disease Registries Section: 512-776-7268
- Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Section: 512-776-7219

5000 Definition

5100 Environmental Health

Environmental health is the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being by:

- identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents, and
- limiting exposures to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, water, soil, food, and other environmental media or settings that may adversely affect human health.

5200 Environmental Health Professional or Specialist

An environmental health professional or specialist is a practitioner with appropriate academic education and training and registration or certification to:

- investigate, sample, measure, and assess hazardous environmental agents in various environmental media and settings;
- recommend and apply protective interventions that control hazards to health;
- develop, promote, and enforce guidelines, policies, laws, and regulations;
- develop and provide health communications and educational materials;
- manage and lead environmental health units within organizations;
- perform systems analysis;
- engage community members to understand, address, and resolve problems;
- review construction and land use plans and make recommendations;
- interpret research utilizing science and evidence to understand the relationship between health and environment; and
- interpret data and prepare technical summaries and reports. (<https://www.neha.org/about-neha/definitions-environmental-health>)