Essex County Used Cooking Oil Spill

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
MAY 2021

Incident Management Goals

- Be better at the SOSC Role
- Be better at coordinating with response partners (state, local, fed and NGO)
- Be better at soliciting and addressing stakeholder issues/concerns

History…

- Managing incidents with regional pollution response assets,
- Then with regional program and CO pollution response assets
- Then with multi-program, multi-region, and CO PREP assets

Incident Overview

- 22 Feb 2021, ~13:45, a tanker truck carrying approximately 6500 gallons of used cooking oil crashed in the median of Route 17

- A clean out on the top of the tanker ruptured, releasing used cooking oil to a stormwater drop inlet

Incident Overview (cont)

- The stormwater conveyance system discharged to a tributary of Lewis Creek and ultimately to Lewis Creek, which is a tributary to the Rappahannock River.
- Estimated volume of oil released: 2000 - 3000 gallons.

Initial Actions

- Essex Co, VDEM and DEQ Responded
- DEQ made notifications to partners agencies (fed and state)
- DEQ consulted NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator regarding
  - Plant and wildlife conditions
  - Concerns for impacts to plants & wildlife
  - Expected behavior of the oil

Initial Actions (cont)

- Due to steep terrain, water velocities and limited daylight, no additional defensives actions were possible

On-Going Actions

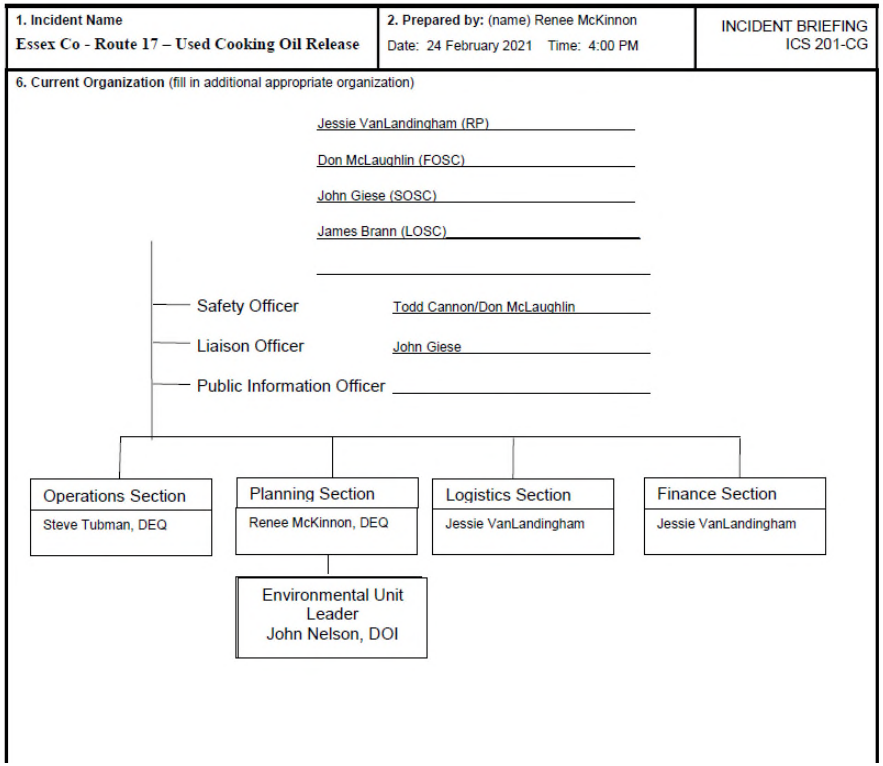
- The RP hired a response contractor

- VDEM provided drone overflight

Incident Command

- A virtual Unified Command was established and was composed of EPA, DEQ, Responsible Party and Essex County Emergency Manager.
- Other agencies that were part of the response included VDEM, DWR, USFWS, DOI, NOAA and USCG.
- An Environmental Unit (EU) was part of the Unified Command that was lead by USFWS John Nelson. The EU was instrumental in ensuring good communications between natural resource trustees and the Unified Command.
- Areas of Concern for the Unified Command were:
  - Environmental Impact
  - Wildlife impact
  - Media interest
  - Stakeholder engagement

Environmental IMT



- Treated this as a Type 3.5 incident
- Utilized ICS 201 (Incident Briefing), ICS 215A (Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis) and Situation Reports (SITREPS)
- Conducted Unified Command Meetings and Command and General Staff Meetings (virtual) following agenda's and tracking open action items.
- UC agreed on Key Functions, Incident Priorities, Limitations, Constraints and Objectives.

End Points

The following end points were established by the Unified Command:

- Active product recovery will end when all product currently on the first beaver pond has been recovered.
- Passive product recovery will end when oil is no longer being mobilized by rain events and collecting on booms. The UC (or representatives) will reinspect the site when OPS believes cleanup endpoints have been met. UC will provide signoff on cleanup if they deem that cleanup endpoints have been achieved.
- Application of a native wetland plant seed mix will occur immediately after completion of cleanup. DEQ will provide suggestions for seed mixes, and property owner and RP will give concurrence.

Why now???

- Review of lessons learned
  - Norfolk Southern Incident
- Provides efficiency (especially in a virtual environment)
- Ensures all people impacted by the incident have channels to go through so that the Unified Command is aware and can make sound decisions.
- Ensured tasking was getting completed (decision on end points, transition from active product recovery to passive recovery to remediation).
- Provides opportunities for training and relationship building.

What We Learned (for the next one)

- We can manage an incident virtually
- Should include someone from the response contractor(s) during Command & General Staff Meetings
- Pushing for local on-scene coordinator involvement can benefit a response, i.e. local stakeholder knowledge and can bring resources
- Thinking outside the box (i.e use of NOAA SSC & Soil and Water Conservation District staff)
- For smaller incidents may only need a conference call with response partners and stakeholders.

Next Steps

- Agency Policy Development: Development of an Environmental IMT Annex for DEQ Agency Support Plan in support of Virginia's Emergency Operation Plan.
- Training
- Exercise/Real World Events
- Modify

Questions?

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