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United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

**ADMIRAL CRAIG E. BONE
11th DISTRICT COMMANDER**

ON THE

M/V COSCO BUSAN SPILL RESPONSE

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD & MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19 NOVEMBER 2007

Good morning Mr. Chairman. I am Rear Admiral Craig Bone, Eleventh Coast Guard District Commander, and I am here today to discuss the Coast Guard's response to the recent M/V COSCO BUSAN oil spill.

I am responsible for all Coast Guard missions in the 3.3 million square miles of coastal and offshore waters extending 1,000 nautical miles off of California, and south to the Colombian and Ecuadorian borders in South America. I provide oversight, guidance, and set policy for all marine safety, security, and operational activities within the Eleventh District's area of responsibility.

ALLISION OF THE M/V COSCO BUSAN AND RESPONSE

On November 7th, 2007, the M/V COSCO BUSAN at pier 56 departed with its crew, a required state-licensed pilot and an assist tug. As required, the pilot of the vessel was in communication with Coast Guard Sector San Francisco Vessel Traffic Service (VTS). The Vessel Traffic Service is an advisory system that assists and provides information to pilots, masters, and operators of vessels navigating within its geographic area of responsibility. The M/V COSCO BUSAN was outbound intending to pass beneath the Delta Echo span of the San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge. The distance between pier 56 and the bridge is approximately three miles.

At approximately 0827, the Vessel Traffic Service operator questioned the pilot's course of action regarding continued intent to pass through the Delta Echo span. Approximately three minutes later, the vessel allided along its portside with the bridge's fender system tearing away a section of the vessel, and causing a 100 ft by 12 ft long gash cutting into two fuel tanks and one ballast tank.

Within minutes, the pilot onboard the M/V COSCO BUSAN notified Sector San Francisco's Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) that he had allided with the Delta Tower of the Bay Bridge. Coast Guard Sector San Francisco VTS immediately notified CALTRANS and the Sector Command Center (SCC) of the incident. Sector San Francisco issued a safety broadcast over marine-band radio to notify other boaters in the vicinity. The pilot then took the vessel to anchorage 7 and was relieved by a replacement pilot at 0855. The weather at the time of the incident, and throughout the rest of the morning and early afternoon, was heavy patchy fog with visibility reported as low as 300 ft.

In any marine casualty; finding, verifying, and relaying information about the extent of damage to a vessel and determining the size of a spill is challenging. At 0903, Sector San Francisco dispatched a safety and pollution investigation team aboard a Coast Guard 41' small boat. After evaluating the condition of the bridge tower and supporting base, the pollution investigation team observed oil around the bridge tower and leading up to the vessel. On scene at anchorage 7, the crew observed that the discharge of oil from the ruptured fuel tanks on the COSCO BUSAN was minimal. The pollution investigator embarked the vessel to conduct the investigation.

At 0918 the pilot called the Oil Spill Response Organization (Marine Spill Response Corporation - MSRC) and reported that 10 barrels of oil spilled and the leak was secured. At 0935, MSRC responded per an existing contract with the responsible party to begin clean-up operations. At 0942 the responsible party reported the incident to California OES who notified USCG, EPA, DFG, OSPR, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, CA State Land Commission, CA Coastal Commission, Parks and Recreation, Alameda County, and the City of Oakland.

At 0945 a Unified Command was established between the Federal and State-On-Scene-Coordinators (USCG and Cal DFG) at Coast Guard Sector San Francisco. Coast Guard Headquarters, CG Pacific Area, the National Operations Center, and the Intel Coordination Center were notified of the incident.

At 1046 the sector casualty investigator and marine inspector conducted a damage assessment and investigation.

At 1200 Coast Guard pollution teams departed Sector San Francisco for a shoreline assessment. The pollution response team onboard the M/V COSCO BUSAN disembarked the vessel, and a Cal DFG investigation team and an additional pollution investigator embarked the M/V COSCO BUSAN for investigation, determination of amount spilled, and sample taking. At 1230 the shoreline teams reported oil north of the Bay Bridge along the San Francisco waterfront. The Coast Guard deployed an Aids to Navigation Team which reported all aids in the vicinity were watching properly.

At 1246 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provided an oil spill trajectory for the Unified Command. By mid-afternoon, response efforts continued but were slowed due to continued foggy conditions. The foggy weather specifically limited the ability of responders to ascertain and monitor the discharged oil from aircraft.

At 1348 Sector San Francisco held a conference call with the San Francisco Mayor's Office and San Francisco City and Port Stakeholders. The Coast Guard and City of San Francisco Department of Health issued a joint press release.

At 1649 CA Department of Fish and Game (DFG) investigators and pollution investigators reported that approximately 53,500 to 58,000 gallons were discharged during the incident. This revised estimate was based on fuel transfer and other data and calculations.

The Coast Guard, the Responsible Party, and the Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSRO) initiated an aggressive response based on the size and fuel carrying capacity of the vessel, directing all immediately available spill response assets to the scene. The Unified Command's initial skimming efforts resulted in over 8,000 gallons of fuel oil recovered within the first 10 hours as well as deployment of skimming boom and protection boom around environmentally-sensitive areas identified in the Area Contingency Plans (ACP).

The Coast Guard continues to lead the federal response to this effort working within the unified command and with all agencies, affected parties and volunteers. In doing so, the Coast Guard has deployed considerable resources such as pollution investigators, marine inspectors, small boats, patrol boats, helicopters, the Pacific Strike Team, and the Maritime Safety and Security Teams to assess, protect, and respond to this incident.

UNIFIED RECOVERY EFFORTS

In every major marine incident involving multiple agencies, a unified command is established under the National Incident Management System (NIMS), by which Federal, state, and local agencies that have jurisdictional responsibility collaborate to establish unified strategies and goals. The San Francisco Area Contingency Plan (ACP) provides the mechanism through which the oil spill prevention, protection, response, and recovery clean-up efforts continue to be achieved.

PREPAREDNESS

The Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security are committed to preparing for integrated, national responses to disasters, attacks and other incidents. In the San Francisco Bay region as well as throughout the country, the Coast Guard plans and prepares for incidents such as this event through Area Committees comprised of Federal, state, and local agencies and other stakeholders.

Our current preparedness efforts are informed by lessons-learned and regulatory actions stemming from other serious incidents such as the M/V EXXON VALDEZ oil spill in 1989. Specifically, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90), which was passed into law following rising public concern over the M/V EXXON VALDEZ incident, laid the groundwork for significant improvements to oil spill prevention and response preparedness. OPA 90 expanded the Federal government's ability to respond to oil spills and informed improvements in several areas including development of response plans, closer interagency cooperation, periodic exercises, spill response protocols, and area committees among others.

The San Francisco Bay Area Committee, chaired by the Coast Guard, writes and maintains the San Francisco Bay Area Contingency Plan (ACP), which is being used to manage this response operation. Recent experience with Safe Seas, Golden Guardian, and other complex exercises continues to refine and improve preparedness and coordination with responders across the Bay Area. Specifically, the Safe Seas 2006 exercise allowed the response community to establish an effective "battle rhythm" that has been of significant benefit for the M/V COSCO BUSAN response.

Safe Seas 2006 was a multi-agency effort lead by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, California Office of Spill Prevention and Response, Harley Marine Services, and the Department of Interior. More than 400 people participated in training, field operations, oceanographic surveys, and incident command post activities. Vessels and aircraft from NOAA, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force Reserve, Marine Spill Response Corporation, Alameda County Sheriff's Department, City of San Francisco officials and Bodega Marine Laboratory participated in the exercise.

The Safe Seas 2006 exercise simulated a collision in San Francisco Bay between an inbound bulk freight cargo ship inbound to San Francisco and an outbound tug towing a tank barge. In the exercise scenario the barge sank from the collision, with oil spilling from both the barge and damaged cargo ship.

INVESTIGATIONS

Immediately after Sector San Francisco was notified of the collision, Coast Guard marine investigators were called upon to respond. The Coast Guard's preliminary investigation has found no evidence of vessel mechanical propulsion system or steering failures as causal factors in the casualty, and indicates that causal and contributing factors will include human error. The Coast Guard continues to support the NTSB, which is conducting an independent marine safety investigation of the incident. The Coast Guard also continues to conduct its own parallel marine safety investigation of this casualty. The Coast Guard is also fully supporting the Department of Justice.

INCIDENT SPECIFIC PREPAREDNESS REVIEW (ISPR)

The Coast Guard Chief of Staff has chartered an Incident Specific Preparedness Review (ISPR), comprised of representatives from Federal, state, and local agencies, the maritime industry, and

environmental groups to assess our response. The focus of the ISPR is to compare actual response activities, including notifications, with the Area Contingency Plan. The ISPR team's goal is to engage a broad group of stakeholders, evaluate the overall effectiveness of the response, and recommend areas for improvement.

The ISPR assessment will be conducted in two stages. The first stage will cover the initial two weeks of the response and a final report of findings and recommendations is required to be completed within 90 days. The second stage will cover the remainder of the response and is required to be completed by May of next year. The Commandant is personally committed to the ISPR process and will carefully consider all recommendations.

LESSONS-LEARNED

Volunteerism

The Bay Area displays a unique passion for the environment and I am inspired by the regional spirit of volunteerism. For example, we had many residents waiting in line for training and orientation programs who were committed to actively participate in response and recovery operations. It was unprecedented to have a large segment of the community willing to handle hazardous material. We learned that our ACP must incorporate State and local stakeholders as well as train and prepare volunteers in advance as feasible.

Communications

Communications are probably the most difficult aspect of any major response effort where timely notifications are critical for public safety and risk-based, prioritized deployment of resources. For example, the COSCO BUSAN Incident Unified Command found a need to better incorporate liaisons to support daily planning and execution. A robust and developed liaison program needs to be incorporated into the Area Contingency Plan. The ISPR team will carefully consider these and other issues during their process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.