



FEMA

LESSON LEARNED

Incident Management: Informing Elected Officials about Incidents

SUMMARY

Emergency managers should consider developing a policy and a protocol to ensure that all elected officials and other relevant executive leaders are appropriately informed about incidents.

DESCRIPTION

On the morning of November 7, 2007, the motor vessel (M/V) *Cosco Busan*, a 902-foot container ship, struck the base of a Bay Bridge tower in San Francisco Bay, resulting in an oil spill of approximately 53,000 gallons into the Bay. Initial reports stated that only 140 gallons of oil had been released. However, reports throughout the day indicated that a much larger spill had occurred. A Unified Command structure was established on November 8, with the California Department of Fish and Game, the US Coast Guard (USCG), and a representative of the M/V *Cosco Busan* responsible for planning, managing, and responding to the oil spill.

The M/V *Cosco Busan* accident constituted the largest oil spill in the San Francisco Bay in over two decades and was the first time a ship struck the Bay Bridge.

The City and County of San Francisco (CCSF), California, departments supported response and recovery operations following the spill. CCSF departments developed and implemented a range of measures, including beach cleanup, waterfront protection, wildlife protection, and the management of volunteers.

On the morning of the incident, various CCSF departments received initial notification of the incident from multiple sources, including the media and the Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Center. Most reports stated that the incident was not related to terrorism but did not indicate an associated oil spill. This suggested that the appropriate response was for CCSF departments to continue to monitor the situation. CCSF departments did not receive an official notification through normal channels or through a clearly defined mechanism/process in the initial hours of the incident. By the early afternoon, the USCG reported a 140-gallon oil spill due to the accident. In a conference call later that evening, CCSF departments were officially notified that the oil spill released approximately 58,000 gallons.

During the initial stages of the incident, only those members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors whose districts border the Bay were notified of the incident. Other supervisors did not receive notifications or regular updates.

The after-action report (AAR) observes that while the oil spill primarily impacted districts along the Bay, the response operations impacted all districts within CCSF. Consequently, the AAR recommends that "all district supervisors and

The Board of Supervisors is the legislative branch of the CCSF. The Board consists of 11 members.

executive leadership should be notified and kept apprised of significant events affecting CCSF." This can be achieved through the development of a policy and a protocol within the CCSF emergency system.

Emergency managers should consider developing a policy and a protocol to ensure that all elected officials and other relevant executive leaders are appropriately informed about incidents.

CITATION

City and County of San Francisco. *City and County of San Francisco M/V Cosco Busan Oil Spill After Action Report*. 13 Mar 2008.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35502>

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