



FEMA

## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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### LESSON LEARNED

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## Incident Management: Developing Standard Operating Procedures for Sharing Incident Information among Government Departments

### SUMMARY

Local governments should consider developing a standard operating procedure (SOP) for distributing incident and emergency information among departments. Local governments should ensure that each department has an internal communications system and protocols for distributing incident and emergency information.

### 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 volunteer management.

On the morning of the incident, various CCSF departments received initial notification of the incident from multiple sources, including from 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 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, the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management (DEM) was officially notified that the oil spill released approximately 53,000 gallons.

Throughout early stages of the incident, CCSF departments communicated through personal phone calls, conference calls scheduled by DEM, and coordination meetings at the San Francisco Emergency Operations Center (EOC). These processes enabled departments to share information successfully. However, the after-action report (AAR) observes that clearly defined SOPs could improve information sharing among CCSF departments, particularly

prior to a formal EOC activation. According to the AAR, SOPs should address the notification of CCSF departments as well as the sharing of information. The SOPs should identify the lead agency that is responsible for providing information and should include a pre-designated distribution list of departments and personnel to be notified. Upon notification, each department should be responsible for keeping its respective personnel informed. The AAR notes that information sharing SOPs will help to provide verifiable, timely, and coordinated messages about incidents that affect or may affect San Francisco.

Local governments should consider developing an SOP for distributing incident and emergency information among departments. Local governments should ensure that each department has an internal communications system and protocols for distributing incident and emergency information.

#### **CITATION**

City and County of San Francisco. *City and County of San Francisco M/V Cosco Busan Oil Spill After Action Report*. 12 Mar 2008.

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

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