

RI DEM OFFICE OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE Annual Report for 2001

INTRODUCTION

Staff of the Office of Emergency Response provide initial on-site response and support to state and municipal fire and emergency teams handling petroleum and hazardous materials/waste releases or spills. At incidents, the emergency responder provides advice and oversight for cleanups to ensure that the environment is protected and remediation work is completed to remove hazardous contaminants and pollutants. In some instances the emergency responders will remove waste from sites for disposal and conduct small cleanups. Examples of this may include removal of mercury, removal of small containers or clean up of small oil spills. On larger-scale spills and releases, emergency responders will call in contract environmental clean up companies to handle removal and remediation of spilled or released petroleum products and hazardous wastes that threaten the environment and the public's health and safety. Reports are completed and cost recovery for clean up work is tracked and sought. This year, the emergency response program responded to 842 incidents in an effort to contain pollutants/hazardous materials and monitor clean up.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / PERFORMANCE

The Emergency Response program had another impressive year of performance. Some of the more major accomplishments include:

Anthrax Threats

The Department's emergency response team spent many hours coordinating with state and local health and safety officials on biological weapons issues and participating in anthrax threat screenings. The Department sent team members to the federal Department of Justice training center to participate in an intensive Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program. The Department along with the State Fire Marshal's Office, National Guard and Emergency Management Agency established a screening center to evaluate potential Anthrax material for radiation, presence of explosives, and volatile organic compounds prior to submittal to the Department of Health for analysis. The Department's Emergency Response Team and members of the state Bomb Squad also formed an Anthrax Strike Team to respond to incidents that are beyond the capabilities of local responders.

Oil Spill - Cove Metals, Burrillville

On the eve of opening day of trout season, DEM Emergency Response staff tracked down an oil release from 2 abandoned 30,000-gallon underground storage tanks flowing through a sluiceway into the Branch River. DEM immediately placed oil booms to protect the river and pumped over 110,000 gallons of #6 oil, #2 oil and oily water from the tanks and about 2,500 gallons from a trench excavated to prevent further release. The property owner paid for the cost of cleanup including removal of 518 tons of oil-contaminated soil and 9 drums of hazardous waste. The Department issued a Notice of Violation to the owner, ordering completion of the clean up and assessing a \$48,130 penalty.

The case is on appeal. The Department's ongoing review of site conditions shows no oil in the groundwater at this time.

In addition to the major items noted above, the Emergency Response program was involved in 38 major spills and releases along with numerous other emergencies and accomplished the following:

Petroleum and Petroleum Contaminated Soils

- 110,074 gallons of waste oil and 130,400 gallons of oil/water from the environment or that posed an immediate threat to the environment or the public
- 12,645 cubic yards and 1077 tons of petroleum contaminated soil from the environment.

Hazardous Chemicals and Soil Contaminated By Hazardous Chemicals

- 52,138 gallons of hazardous chemicals removed from the environment or that posed an immediate threat to the environment or the public.
- 578 cubic yards of hazardous waste contaminated soil removed from the environment that posed an immediate threat to the environment.
- 55 pounds of hazardous chemicals removed that posed an immediate threat to the environment.
- 3252 pounds of hazardous waste removed

Propane

- The Office was involved with the removal of 325 pounds, plus 160 gallons and 32 tanks of propane.

Asbestos

- The Office was involved with the discovery, improper storage and proper disposal of 400 pounds and 4 drums of asbestos. The material was removed from locations to eliminate an immediate threat to the public.

Mercury

- The Office was involved with the removal and/or recovery of 50.6 pounds of mercury. This material will go to a recycler in New York for reuse. Twenty – One (21) pounds of mercury-contaminated material and 15 cubic feet of mercury-contaminated soil was removed from the environment or from people who no longer had a use for the material. A contractor handled proper disposal of this material.

Septage

- The Office was involved with the treatment or removal of 4,065 gallons of sewage that released into the environment.

Biohazards

- The Office was involved in the investigation of 7 threats of anthrax.