

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Staff Receive Oil Spill Response Training
and
Learn New Techniques to Deploy Boom in Fast Waters

Last October, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management staff, including the five-member Emergency Response Team, staff from other DEM offices, staff from three of DEM's environmental contractors, staff from CRMC and the Coast Guard joined forces for 3 days at a 24 Hr training course entitled "Inland Water Oil Spill Response - Operations Level." This course was presented by DOWCAR Environmental Management, Inc., a New Mexico company known for its knowledge and expertise in the application of fast water booming to control oil spills. Michael Mulhare, DEM's Environmental Response Coordinator, who was familiar with DOWCAR stated, "DOWCAR was selected for this training because of their experience teaching fast water booming techniques to various federal and state agencies as well as the oil industry. This was an excellent opportunity for DEM staff from other divisions as well as our response partners in the private and public sector to train together and learn new oil response techniques which will improve our ability to respond in Rhode Island." James Ball, a DEM Oil and Hazmat Specialist stated, "The course was very effective because it combined classroom and field exercises. What you learned each day was reinforced in the field so everyone was able to have hands-on with the equipment and test the techniques."



Staff prepare boom for placement in river.

On day one of the course, attendees updated their knowledge about important governmental regulations, Incident Command System (ICS) procedures for oil spill response, boom design and construction and river boom deployment techniques. Oil spill containment boom is the primary tool used to divert, deflect and contain floating oil/petroleum products on the water. It is important to be familiar with the array of booms and their various applications. The course provided instruction in the five primary components of boom as well as the various types of containment boom and how it operates. While DEM staff and contractors frequently use boom to contain and absorb for disposal the variety of spills they encounter, this course focused on the placement of boom in fast waters and the specialized equipment needed to

make the deployment successful. It provided the students with the opportunity to participate in hands-on boom deployment in a variety of river conditions. DOWCAR brought state of the art equipment to demonstrate to the class including the “Leo Bag” which contains mountaineering equipment that has been adapted for use with fast water booming.



Boom is placed at an angle to deflect oil to the shore where it can be collected for proper disposal.

They also brought their trailer, which contains 1,000 feet of boom and ancillary equipment, over 19,000 feet of rope and personal protective equipment. For each afternoon session, the class was organized under ICS. ICS positions were rotated throughout the training. Participants connected the various components of the boom system together, boom was pulled into the water and various containment strategies were deployed.

The second day’s discussion focused on the wide variety of oil skimmers available on the market today as well as the variety of containment and cleanup techniques. Fast water booming deployment techniques were presented using video depicting actual scenarios in rivers all across America where DOWCAR has worked or conducted training. That morning’s session was followed by a river boom deployment exercise on the Pawcatuck River. On day three, the main topic was the use of various oil sorbents and chemical agents that responders are likely to come into contact with. Documentation procedures were reviewed and contingency planning was discussed and reinforced. The last day of field exercises were conducted on the Blackstone River. Attendees were tested on the variety of topics and techniques that they had learned.

In the upcoming months, DEM will participate in a variety of drills and exercises with other first responders and agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Coast Guard, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, private industry and the City of Providence, all of whom are involved in the vital work of maintaining and preserving Rhode Island’s natural resources. These drills will provide additional opportunities for DEM to practice the techniques and procedures necessary to successfully respond to an oil spill event.