



Oil Program

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National Contingency Plan Overview

The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, more commonly called the National Contingency Plan or NCP, is the federal government's blueprint for responding to both oil spills and hazardous substance releases. The National Contingency Plan is the result of our country's efforts to develop a national response capability and promote overall coordination among the hierarchy of responders and contingency plans.

The first National Contingency Plan was developed and published in 1968 in response to a massive oil spill from the oil tanker *Torrey Canyon* off the coast of England the year before. More than 37 million gallons of crude oil spilled into the water, causing massive environmental damage. To avoid the problems faced by response officials involved in this incident, U.S. officials developed a coordinated approach to cope with potential spills in U.S. waters. The 1968 plan provided the first comprehensive system of accident reporting, spill containment, and cleanup, and established a response headquarters, a national reaction team, and regional reaction teams (precursors to the current [National Response Team](#) and [Regional Response Teams](#)).

Congress has broadened the scope of the National Contingency Plan over the years. As required by the [Clean Water Act of 1972](#), the NCP was revised the following year to include a framework for responding to hazardous substance spills as well as oil discharges. Following the passage of [Superfund legislation](#) in 1980, the NCP was broadened to cover releases at hazardous waste sites requiring [emergency removal actions](#). Over the years, additional revisions have been made to the NCP to keep pace with the enactment of legislation. The latest revisions to the NCP were finalized in 1994 to reflect the oil spill provisions of the [Oil Pollution Act of 1990](#).

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