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EMERGENCY PREVENTION,
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Planning Guidance for MOSPA exercises

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1. Introduction

The *Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Spill Preparedness and Response in the Arctic* (MOSPA Agreement) aims to strengthen emergency cooperation and coordination of Arctic oil spill response operations amongst the eight Arctic States (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States). In order to focus the preparedness activities undertaken to enhance response coordination under the MOSPA Agreement, EPPR created the Marine Environmental Response Experts Group (MER EG) in 2016. MER EG is a group working under the direction of the EPPR with a focus on promoting the implementation of EPPR initiatives specific to the MOSPA Agreement, as well as future initiatives as determined by consensus of the EPPR membership. While there are many aspects of marine oil spill preparedness, this guidance has been prepared specifically for the planning of joint emergency response exercises referred to in both Article 13 of the MOSPA Agreement and Section 9 of the *Operational Guidelines*, which address joint exercises and training.

2. Background

The MOSPA has been in place since 2013, with EPPR-led exercises occurring in 2014, 2016 and 2018. The planning of the first two exercises was undertaken primarily by the country holding the Arctic Council Chairmanship with support from host countries and delegates of EPPR. The planning of the third EPPR-led MOSPA exercise was shared between the country with Arctic Council Chairmanship and the MER EG.

In addition, EPPR delegates have participated in arctic oil spill response exercises and conferences led by Member States.

3. Purpose

An important part of the MER EG's work is contributing to the development, execution and evaluation of MOSPA exercises with a goal of working together towards continuous improvement. The MER EG will benefit from a uniform approach in supporting the host country in developing a MOSPA exercise, or in developing the MOSPA component of a larger exercise.

MOSPA exercises provide an opportunity for the Parties to collectively problem-solve challenges of mutual interest. The creation of guidance to facilitate the design and development of MOSPA exercises will help standardize the process, identify activities that must occur regardless of lead, and maintain flexibility to mesh with the domestic planning processes of each Party.

Oil spill response exercises conducted in the Arctic are not exclusively held under the umbrella of the Arctic Council and EPPR e.g. national exercises or international exercises related to



other agreements. Where appropriate, the MER EG will collaborate and promote the implementation and exercising of the MOSPA Agreement among other groups. An example is the operationally oriented Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF), which should do their planning in accordance with EPPR/MER EG guidance to ensure accuracy and effectiveness.

This guidance will be reviewed and updated as necessary as the MER EG gains more experience in planning and supporting exercises that test the MOSPA.

4. Definitions

As per Section 9 of the *Operational Guidelines*, carrying out an exercise is at the discretion of the Party in which the Arctic Council Chairmanship resides. Should a Party wish to carry out a MOSPA exercise during its Chairmanship, their intentions can be presented to the MER EG.

4.1. MOSPA exercises

Exercises provide an opportunity to test plans, processes, training and equipment within an organization or across organizations in advance of an emergency event to perfect the response process.

A MOSPA exercise is a discussion-based or operations-based activity that is conducted to validate the *Operational Guidelines* and associated processes in response to a simulated oil spill. MOSPA exercises can test the *Operational Guidelines* and processes in two ways:

- Directly A direct test of the *Operational Guidelines* and processes means linking the objectives directly to MOSPA documentation and response tools that have been developed by EPPR, with an emphasis on the *Agreement* and/or the *Operational Guidelines*.
- Indirectly An indirect test of the *Operational Guidelines* and processes means linking the objectives either to Arctic marine oil spill response operations or to administrative aspects of bi-lateral or multi-lateral spill response.

Although EPPR is the working group of the Arctic Council that is responsible for reporting to the Ministers on the implementation of the MOSPA Agreement, it is recognized that exercises of the Agreement may occur outside of the direction and / or oversight of EPPR. Best practices and opportunities for improvement identified independently of EPPR should be presented to the MER EG. The MER EG will consider any recommendations as part of its ongoing work to improve the *MOSPA Agreement* and *Operational Guidelines* and further present them to EPPR.

4.2. Exercise categories

There are generally two categories of exercises: discussion-based and operations-based.

- Discussion-based: Discussion-based exercises are exercises that are used to familiarize participants with current plans, policies, agreement, and procedures and potentially



to develop new ones. Types of discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops and tabletop exercises.

- Operations-based: Operations-based exercises are exercises that validate plans, policies, agreements, and procedures, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify resource gaps in an operational environment. Types of operations-based exercises include drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises.

The following list of exercise types provides a basic overview of commonly utilized terms within the exercise framework.

- Seminar – event type used to introduce and familiarize players with information and concepts to establish a common level of understanding.
- Workshop – event type used to discuss a particular topic; can include the scoping and development of documents such as plans, processes and procedures.
- Table-top exercise – a simulated response to a fictional oil spill incident. Players discuss actions to be taken in response to the scenario. This can be a facilitated discussion and focus on specific aspects of an oil spill response.
- Drills – Drills are exercises that are initiated without advance notice to the participants. The only drills conducted under the MOSPA will be to test the notification process (Communications).
- Functional exercise – an operational exercise focused on a functional element of response (i.e. communications, response management, oil recovery, etc.).
- Full-scale exercise – an exercise that has simultaneous field and response management activities.

5. Designing a MOSPA exercise

MOSPA exercises can either be designed as a unique event or held in coordination with another exercise and can be discussion-based, operations-based or a combination of styles. Exercise goals and planning requirements will be influenced by:

- Opportunities for improvement identified through past activities;
- Opportunities provided by leveraging with another event;
- Direction of the EPPR Working Group (and advice of the MER EG); and
- Goals of the Arctic Council Chairmanship (whose country will likely be leading the MOSPA exercise planning process).

Unless otherwise agreed, the lead planner of the MOSPA exercise should be a representative from the Party who is chairing the Arctic Council. As per the *Operational Guidelines*, each Party should assign at least one member of its Competent National Authority (or delegate) to serve on the MOSPA Exercise Joint Design Team (MOSPA JDT) to support the lead planner in the development, conduct, evaluation and documentation of the exercise. The lead planner can count on the MER Chair and Vice Chair to be a member of the MOSPA JDT and all MER EG



members are welcome to support them in the planning process. Notwithstanding availability to participate in the MOSPA JDT, MER EG members will be kept up to date on exercise planning efforts. If the Party chairing the Arctic Council assigns planning of the MOSPA exercise to a group other than the EPPR/MER EG, the MER EG can offer to provide a MOSPA Liaison to provide guidance and advice regarding the implementation of the Agreement and the Operational Guidelines.

The EPPR Executive Secretariat (EPPR ES) plays a vital role in the administration and planning of MOSPA exercises; therefore, coordination across the MOSPA JDT, MER EG, and EPPR ES is critical. This will afford proper logistics planning whether the MOSPA exercise is table-top, full-scale, or incorporated into another exercise.

In instances where the MOSPA exercise is either an integrated or discrete component of a larger exercise, the MER EG representative whose country is hosting the larger exercise can represent EPPR interests in the domestic exercise planning meetings as a MOSPA Liaison. The goal of this will be to assess where integration of MOSPA objectives make the most sense and to provide guidance to the domestic exercise planning team on MOSPA preparedness and response processes.

Each Party is responsible for identifying potential stakeholders that, where appropriate, should be included in the planning and execution of joint exercises.

5.1. Objectives

When determining exercise objectives, the MER EG will consider the opportunities and goals (mentioned above), outcomes from past exercises (Appendix 1) and the following general response principles:

- The response to an emergency starts at the local level and escalates to the level of assistance required and will consider the closest potentially available resource which may mean requesting assistance through an agreement with a neighboring country before a multi-lateral agreement;
- incident particulars will drive the need for escalation of assistance; and
- not all emergency responses require external assistance.

Despite these principles, a MOSPA exercise could have some elements of artificiality in order to specifically achieve its objectives.

MOSPA exercise objectives should focus on either the administrative aspects of a multi-national response or the operational aspects of an oil spill response in the Arctic. Administrative aspects of a multi-national response are elements of response that come into play when multiple countries are engaged in spill response operations. Examples include:

- Customs;
- Immigration;



- Occupational Health & Safety;
- Language; and
- Liability.

Operational aspects of an oil spill response in the Arctic are elements of response that are unique to or predominantly found in the Arctic operating environment. Examples include:

- Testing oil modeling in ice;
- Response in multiyear ice;
- Burning on/in ice;
- Shorefast ice response (including Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Techniques);
- Radio communications at high altitudes;
- Accommodating workers in remote locations;
- Servicing equipment in remote locations;
- Mechanical / hydraulic equipment tests at low temperatures;
- Response in 24 hour daylight/nighttime conditions;
- Inverted response management;
- Logistics in remote areas: fueling, food, workers; and
- Use of imagery.

Advancing objectives related to some elements of response may require expertise that is not resident among the agencies represented on the MER EG or the JDT. Depending on the specific exercise objective, this expertise can be sought through each Member State's delegation or through other multi-lateral coordination bodies, such as the ACGF.

Exercise objectives should also take into consideration the advice of the Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council. These groups include the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council. Permanent Participants have specialized knowledge and unique experiences as Arctic Indigenous People, which can benefit the oil spill response improvement process.

Observers to the EPPR are also welcome to provide input related to exercise objectives for a MOSPA exercise.

5.2. Scenario selection

Scenarios provide information on the initiating event that triggers exercise play. Scenarios for a MOSPA exercise can be chosen from the library of incident scenarios located on the EPPR website, developed in specific consideration of the objectives identified by the JDT, or already in place, as would be the case for an independent oil spill response exercise. If a MOSPA exercise is to be appended to a larger exercise, the use of sub-scenarios can help influence exercise play to address MOSPA objectives.



5.3. Exercise type

The following considerations may affect the choice of exercise type:

- Novelty of the objective to the MOSPA exercise arena;
- Whether or not the MOSPA objectives can be appended to a larger exercise;
- Experience of the players; and
- Availability of the JDT for planning purposes.

The MOSPA JDT will consider that the timing of invitation to the Parties, Permanent Participants, other participants and observers may need to be adjusted based on the type of exercise that is being planned (e.g. operational exercises may require more lead time).

5.4. Exercise phases

MOSPA exercises can be managed like a project with timelines that vary from one to two years, depending on the type and scale of the exercise. Phases of the exercise include planning and development, delivery, evaluation and assessment, and way forward.

5.5. Sample schedule

The following schedule is an example of how the MER EG could support the development of a MOSPA exercise over a two-year period. Exercise schedules *will* vary depending on the type of exercise, resource capabilities, whether or not a MOSPA exercise is appended to another exercise and may be impacted by other factors.

YEAR 1 / EPPR I: face-to-face

- Review of Arctic Council Chairmanship goals and potential linkages to MOSPA.
- Overview of the Host country's exercise design process.
- Initial scoping of MOSPA exercise – if MOSPA objectives are to be incorporated to a larger exercise, Host country could present an outline of the existing event and suggest objectives that could meet MOSPA goals.
- Vessel and equipment assets, if required for the exercise, should be identified during this meeting, with an official request following the meeting.

Intersessional activity: via e-mail and teleconference

- Identify MOSPA JDT.
- Finalize MOSPA exercise objectives development.
- Development of exercise schedule, identification of exercise resource requirements, identification of general location, scenario, and dates of exercise.
- Other activities, on request from Host country.

YEAR 1 / EPPR II: face-to-face

- Report on planning status from exercise lead.



- Identification of MOSPA exercise logistics.
- Discussion of evaluation process¹.

Intersessional activity: via e-mail and teleconference

- Preparation of invitation letters to MER EG members, or other Party technical specialists, depending on the exercise, via their HOD from EPPR Chair.
- Approval of documentation supporting the MOSPA exercise, including Participant Manual and Evaluation Criteria.
- Other activities, on request from Host country.

MOSPA EXERCISE

- Pre-exercise briefing of exercise control, facilitation and evaluation staff.
- Pre-exercise briefing for exercise participants (topics should include: incident management system to be used in the exercise, best practices in oil pollution management, awareness of local safety and cultural concerns, other topics of interest).
- Conduct Exercise.
- Hot Wash up & initiation of After-Action Report (AAR).

Inter sessional activity: via e-mail and teleconference

- Draft AAR with identification of opportunities for improvement, recommendations and best practices.

YEAR 2 / EPPR I: face-to-face

- Present AAR to EPPR highlighting exercise challenges and potential opportunities for improvement.

Intersessional activity: via e-mail and teleconference

- Finalize AAR and upload to EPPR SharePoint and Arctic Council website. Develop strategy to address outcomes of the exercise, including drafting updates to the Operational Guidelines and MOSPA Exercise Planning Guidance, as necessary.

YEAR 2 / EPPR II: face-to-face

- If required, present proposals to address recommendations from the AAR.
- Review of improvement opportunities and challenges from previous exercises, including a review of the MOSPA Exercise Planning Guidance.

¹ Parties to the Copenhagen Agreement have developed a document addressing exercise evaluation considerations which would be a useful reference for the MOSPA JDT



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APPENDIX 1 – Exercise Planning Resources

This list of resources is intended to assist with exercise planning. It will be updated periodically as part of the biennial review of the Guidance.

Available on EPPR Sharepoint Site (<https://arcticcouncil.sharepoint.com>):

- Scenario Library – This library contains a sample of scenarios presented by each Party that represent worst case scenarios.
- After Action Reports for past MOSPA exercises.
- Exercise Participant Manuals and Exercise Evaluation Guides from past exercises.

Exercise Evaluation Considerations paper (developed in support of the Copenhagen Agreement).