



EMERGENCY PREVENTION,  
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

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## EPPR Input to the Arctic Environment Ministers Meeting

### EPPR Mandate and Main Activities

EPPR is mandated to contribute to the prevention, preparedness, and response to environmental emergencies and other accidents, and search and rescue (SAR) in the Arctic. While not an operational response organization, members of the WG conduct projects to address gaps, prepare strategies, share information, collect data, and collaborate with relevant partners on capabilities and research needs that exist in the Arctic. EPPR carries out several projects related to response to environmental emergencies involving oil and radio-nuclear releases, natural disasters, and prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) in small communities. These projects are led by Arctic States or Permanent Participants and in cooperation with other Working Groups when appropriate. Active engagement from Arctic Council Observers is welcome when relevant.

EPPR has been assigned the responsibility for maintaining the “Operational Guidelines” that implement the “Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA)” to which all Arctic States are parties. EPPR also supports the “Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)” in the Arctic by addressing relevant lessons learned from SAR exercises and real incidents. In October 2015, SAOs designated EPPR as the lead on oil pollution prevention, in cooperation with PAME. In this regard, EPPR will coordinate implementation of the “Framework Plan on Oil Pollution Prevention (FP-OPP)”, adopted by Arctic Council Ministers in Iqaluit, April 2015.

### AEMM Focus Areas of Relevance to EPPR

In short, EPPR mandate is focused on *emergencies* – how to prevent them, how to be prepared for them, and finally how to deal with them if and when they occur. Emergencies can happen as a consequence of *climate changes* and preventing emergencies can support Arctic *biodiversity conservation*. From this perspective the core AEMM focus area of direct relevance to EPPR is *Pollution Prevention*.

### Focus Area 2: Pollution Prevention

EPPR is working on several projects that seek to address environmental challenges primarily through common approaches and solutions related to pollution. The following projects are examples of ongoing projects of relevance for the AEMM discussions.

#### MOSPA exercises

The objective of the MOSPA Agreement is to strengthen cooperation, coordination, and mutual assistance among the Parties on oil pollution preparedness and response in the Arctic in order to protect the marine environment from pollution by oil. EPPR works to exercise and maintain the MOSPA

Agreement by ensuring that Arctic states remain engaged in multilateral discussions, which includes exercises specific to validating the MOSPA Operational Guidelines. To facilitate this work, EPPR has created the Marine Environmental Response Experts Group (MER EG) to promote the implementation of EPPR initiatives specific to the MOSPA, as well as future initiatives as determined by consensus among EPPR members.

MOSPA exercises can be both table top exercises and live exercises. Both types are very important in the effort of creating, facilitating, and strengthening cooperation between the response organizations in the Arctic States.

#### Framework plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution

The framework plan for Cooperation on Prevention of Oil Pollution from Petroleum and Maritime Activities in the Marine Areas of the Arctic, adopted by Ministers in 2015, outlines a number of objectives on prevention related to pollution from oil.

EPPR, in cooperation with PAME, has been given the lead to follow-up on the framework plan. The task includes identifying follow-up activities that support the oil pollution prevention objectives of the framework plan and identifying gaps in follow-up and encouraging development of initiatives in these areas. The follow-up activities include input from Arctic States, PPs, WGs, Observers and relevant stakeholders.

The EPPR Secretariat is working to develop an online database to capture the inputs from Arctic States, Arctic Council subsidiary bodies, and relevant stakeholders. The database will facilitate the collection of the information and allow for tagging of information and capturing of metadata with the goal of using the tool to capture progress on the status of implementation of the framework plan for approval at the 2019 Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland.

#### Circumpolar Oil Spill Response Viability Analysis (COSRVA) (Phase 2)

The goal of the COSRVA is to estimate how often different types of response systems can be effectively deployed in different areas of the Arctic based on historical metocean (wind, wave, climate etc) conditions. The COSRVA provides a science-based decision-making tool for Arctic oil spill response contingency planning.

The second phase of the COSRVA project seeks to implement COSRVA results and data into a web-based planning tool that enables working with the results online and directly via computer, tablet or smart-phone. The experience from Norway is that this gives significantly easier and more flexible access to the results of the study than a technical report, hence enabling use that is more practical.

#### PPR in Small Communities

Realizing the vulnerability of small and remote communities and the lack of infrastructure in many Arctic areas, EPPR have initiated a project related to Prevention Preparedness and Response (PPR) in Small Communities. The first phase of the PPR in Small Communities project developed a self-assessment tool for oil spill preparedness, a database of survey responses, and a short report. The outcomes from this phase of the project were greater awareness of risk and preparedness at the local level and access to

best practices; the ability for national governments to address misperceptions or lack of awareness; the identification of gaps in preparedness relative to risk.

Now that this baseline work is complete, the next phase of the project seeks to focus on distributing this information and raising awareness within communities to encourage improved planning and readiness should an oil spill incident take place. The idea is to produce a series of awareness videos primarily designed for social media and potentially link this to other awareness activities. There is also an idea of including the Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters as an education tool for communities to use.

## Challenges

The list of challenges related to pollution prevention and responses in the Arctic Region is very long. Nevertheless it can be narrowed down to a few critical challenges where EPPR has the ability to work towards positive development. Some of these are:

- Responding to an emergency in the Arctic is extremely challenging due to e.g. distances, lack of infrastructure and equipment, weather, ice, light conditions and sea state.
- Organization of national response organizations is different among the states and has in many cases different standards – the challenge is to reconcile this.
- A big emergency requiring cooperation under the agreements would be a big event that would trigger massive attention and different demands from range of players.
- Pollution and responses to pollution has effect on ecosystems and biodiversity and these are to a wide extent unknown.

## Actions to Address Common Challenges

EPPR cannot solve all the challenges but in relation to the projects mentioned, however EPPR can facilitate positive developments by:

- continuing to develop and exercise cooperation through the MOSPA agreement, including SAR elements when appropriate;
- continuing to prepare small communities in all aspects of PPR as they would be the likely first responders;
- continue working with relevant Arctic Council Observers, and other fora outside the Arctic Council to build and share our capacities;
- having support at the highest political levels to ensure capacity for national response authorities so that assets could be accessed quickly if necessary;
- considering effects on ecosystems and biodiversity from pollution and response methods and systems.

## EPPR Main Messages for AEMM

- EPPR is not the most obvious fit for Environmental Ministers, but we need to have coordination between relevant national authorities and Environmental Ministers as emergencies would affect the environment.
- Continued national support for exercises and implementation of the framework plan.
- Capacity for outreach to communities and relevant stakeholders living and working in the Arctic – including small and remote communities.