

Lt. John FitzGerald

**USCG,
PAO, District 8**

NOAA's Regional Preparedness Training:

**Risk Communication During DWH:
Reflections of Responders**

James McPherson, FEMA (USCG RET.)

David M. Kennedy, NOAA

Tom Brosnan, NOAA ORR

June 30, 2016

Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Institute

James McPherson

**FEMA, Region 1
USCG, Retired**

James McPherson, FEMA (USCG Ret.)

- Branding in a crisis—changing the tone from largest oil spill to world's largest oil spill response
- Developing coalitions- working with feds, states and local partners
- Reaching out to “non-friendly forces”—taking James Carville out to dinner
 - Influencing the influencers
- Strategy for success- oil was on beaches
 - Take media offshore to where 65 vessels were working within 5 miles to stop oil from getting to beaches.

James McPherson, FEMA (USCG Ret.)

- **Messaging- Transparency- daily technical media calls “Top hat”**
- **Communicating- words have meaning**
 - **“BP is our partner” not the right message**
- **If you have seen one spill – you have seen just one oil spill.....All are different**
 - **James Cameron’s ROVs, Kevin Costner’s mystery oil separator**

David M. Kennedy

**NOAA ,
Senior Advisor, Arctic**

David M. Kennedy, NOAA

- **Ever-evolving, voracious need of information to media.**
 - **24/7 need from media during a time when responders were responding and not always readily available**
- **Inappropriate information leaked to press caused extra time and effort to correct or address leaked information**
- **Contingency planning: educational sessions for federal agencies and local communities to learn/understand oil spill response**
- **Academic interaction**

Tom Brosnan

**NOAA Office of Response and Restoration
Assessment and Restoration Division**



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Initial NRDA Communications Approach During the DWH Oil Spill

Tom Brosnan
NOAA's Regional Preparedness Training (NRPT)
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7/5/2016 9



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NRDA Communications

Initial challenges: unprecedented and relentless public/press/political interest; multiple uncertainties; rapidly changing conditions; small communications staff; coordination with response and co-trustees; legal concerns

Goal: dispel misconceptions and manage expectations about what NRDA is and isn't, re: process; timeframe; relation to response; roles of co-trustees, BP, academics, the public, etc.

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Overarching Guidelines

- Transparency: early commitment by co-trustees
- Tell our story vs responding to others: lack of information from experts creates a vacuum that's filled by misinformation from amateurs
- Timely responses, especially to press and NGOs
- Acknowledge what we don't know and can't answer, i.e., stay within your expertise and publicly available, don't speculate

Approaches

- NRDA 101 training –internal and external
- Factsheets, infographics, powerpoints, videos, webinars, blogs –repeat messages
- Many interviews and field trips: press, ngo's, politicals, CEQ, etc. Prep Q&A's first!
- Attend public meetings –encourage dialogue
- Publish NRDA injury assessment plans and data



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Lessons Learned

- Pre-spill:
 - Prepare basic explanatory materials: fact sheets, infographics, case examples
 - Get Risk Communications training and include communications in drills
 - Identify 1st tier points of contact to direct questions to
 - Develop relationships w/media and trusted outsiders who can communicate
- Prepare and internally share Q&A's before speaking to press, public, etc.
- Be as transparent as you can and tell your story
- Be timely with responses
- Acknowledge uncertainty and what you can't discuss
- Don't speculate: stay within your expertise and what is publicly known

