

## BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), established in 2011, is a U.S. Department of the Interior agency. BSEE promotes worker safety, environmental protection and conservation of resources through regulatory oversight and enforcement of the offshore energy industry on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

BSEE administers a robust [Oil Spill Preparedness Program](#) through its Oil Spill Preparedness Division (OSPD) to ensure owners and operators of offshore facilities are ready to respond to threats of and actual oil spills that may result from their activities.

OSPD is comprised of scientists, engineers, policy and regulatory experts, and management and administrative specialists – all focused on championing oil spill preparedness.

The Program draws its mandate and purpose from the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of October 18, 1972, as amended, and the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (October 18, 1991). It is framed by the regulations in 30 CFR Part 254

– Oil Spill Response Requirements for Facilities Located Seaward of the Coastline, and 40 CFR Part 300 – National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan.

Acknowledging these authorities and their associated responsibilities, BSEE established the Program with three primary and interdependent roles:

- Preparedness Verification,
- Oil Spill Response Research, and
- Management of Ohmsett - the National Oil Spill Response Research and Renewable Energy Test Facility.

Through these roles, the bureau strives to improve the nation's spill preparedness and response capabilities through comprehensive contingency planning, equipment testing and inspection, quality training, unannounced exercises, research and development (R&D) endeavors, and close engagement with the stakeholders of the National Response System.

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### Oil Spill Response Tactics

The graphic illustrates several oil spill response tactics:
 

- Dispersants:** A plane is shown releasing dispersants into the water to break up the oil spill.
- Spotter Plane:** A small plane is shown monitoring the spill.
- In-situ Burning:** A fire-resistant oil boom is used to contain the spill, and an aerial igniter is used to burn the oil.
- Mechanical Recovery:** Two ships are shown using booms to contain and recover the oil.

**This graphic depicts examples of offshore oil spill countermeasures. However, they are not implemented as closely as depicted. Greater separation is necessary to ensure responders are safely protected against exposure to dispersant droplets or smoke particles.**

*Oil spill response tactics like the ones shown here are described in and exercised from the industry Oil Spill Response Plans reviewed by BSEE in its Oil Spill Preparedness Program. The science, technologies, and policies associated with spill response tactics and strategies are also improved through the program's R&D initiatives.*

## PREPAREDNESS VERIFICATION

Through the Program's Preparedness Verification role, OSPD ensures the bureau, state and federal partners, and industry are ready to an oil spill from an offshore facility. This is accomplished by ensuring that owners and operators meet the applicable provisions of 30 CFR part 254 and other authorities, which include requirements to:

- Maintain approved oil spill response plans (OSRPs);
- Have access to sufficient caches of oil spill response equipment; and

- Have a spill management team with adequate personnel, training, and organizational structures to respond to and mitigate the effects of a spill.

OSPD's Preparedness Analysts review and approve OSRPs, plan and execute unannounced spill response exercises, audit industry training and exercises, and conduct inspections of contracted and industry-owned spill response equipment. Through both office and field activities, Preparedness Analysts assess, test, and bolster the posture of the offshore spill response community.

## OIL SPILL RESPONSE RESEARCH

The technologies and data produced from robust government R&D inform regulatory updates, improve contingency plans, enhance the response tools in oil spill removal organization equipment inventories, and support safe and environmentally sustainable operations.

Government sponsored R&D also spurs economic growth by reducing the impacts of oil spills, yielding new innovations in technologies and tactics, identifying research gaps and dead-ends, and reducing investment risks for private R&D entities.

BSEE Research Scientists and Engineers perform the full

spectrum of R&D (basic, applied, and developmental research). They oversee comprehensive research portfolios that focus on mechanical containment, recovery, and storage; remote sensing; chemical agents (dispersants); in-situ burning; shoreline protection and mitigation; and preparedness initiatives and decision-making tools.

BSEE is also a member of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Oil Pollution Research, where BSEE shares its research progress and helps R&D stakeholders identify and tackle new research gaps and issues.

## OHMSETT

Ohmsett is the National Oil Spill Response and Renewable Energy Test Facility, located in Leonardo, New Jersey. It is the largest outdoor saltwater wave/tow tank facility in North America, where full-scale oil spill response equipment testing, research, and training can be conducted with oil in a marine environment under controlled conditions.

Many of today's commercially available oil spill response products have been tested at Ohmsett and a considerable body of knowledge, including equipment performance data,

has been amassed at the facility over the past several decades.

Domestic and international customers conduct their research and training activities primarily in Ohmsett's 667-foot long tank, which is filled with 2.6 million gallons of saltwater.

In the tank, facility staff and engineers can simulate realistic spill conditions – they can introduce real oil and dispersants, generate waves of various heights and frequencies, and drive a moveable bridge to monitor experiments and training activities.



Overhead view of Ohmsett – for more information visit <https://ohmsett.bsee.gov/>