

## GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM

The National Response Team (NRT) has duties outlined in the National Oil and Hazardous Substance Contingency Plan (NCP), 40 CFR, Part 300, September 15, 1994, to provide support during a response to an oil or hazardous substance spill or release. The NCP provides information concerning what conditions should exist for the NRT to be activated and what services would likely be expected during an activation. This document provides guidelines on the procedures for activation. This document provides guidance only and is not intended to inhibit or impede agency-to-agency requests or the decision-making authority of the NRT Chair and Vice Chair to call a NRT meeting.

1. Purpose: This document provides guidelines for the activation of the NRT, in accordance with the NCP.
2. When the NRT Should Be Activated:
  - a. When an oil discharge or hazardous materials release: (1) exceeds the response capability of the region in which it occurs, (2) transects regional boundaries, and/or (3) involves a substantial threat to the public health or welfare of the United States or the environment, substantial amounts of property, or substantial threats to natural resources (e.g., Spills of National Significance);
  - b. When requested by a NRT member;
  - c. When requested by an On-Scene Coordinator (OSC);
  - d. When requested by a Regional Response Team (RRT);
  - e. When there is competition for resources that requires national interagency adjudication; and/or
  - f. When there are questions that require interagency input into answers at the national level (e.g., from the White House, Congress, Cabinet-level officials, or national-level private groups).
3. What May Be Expected of the NRT?:

The NRT is capable of providing the following assistance and support to the Lead Agency (LA):

  - a. Recommendations to the OSC/Remedial Project Manager (RPM) made through the RRT;
  - b. Interagency liaison to bring additional resources under existing authorities to the response operation;
  - c. Coordination to bring response assistance to the affected region from other regions or districts;
  - d. Coordination with agencies not involved in the initial response; and
  - e. Requested NRT liaison personnel (e.g., Liaison Official (LNO) to national-level Joint Information Center or Command Center).

Participation in activation undertaken by member agencies is carried out under existing programs and authorities.
4. Who Activates the NRT?:

The NRT is activated at the call of the NRT Chair (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Representative) or, in the Chair's absence, by the NRT Vice Chair (U.S. Coast Guard Representative). For the remainder of the document, "NRT Chair" will include the NRT Vice Chair, in the absence of the Chair.

5. Who Chairs the Activated NRT?:

During periods of activation, the NRT is chaired by the LA - the member agency providing the OSC/RPM. This would normally be the EPA for inland responses or the U.S. Coast Guard for coastal and marine responses. However, it could be the Departments of Defense or Energy if a hazardous substance is released from a site of either department.

6. Types of NRT Activation:

- a. Full activation: All of the NRT member agencies are asked to assist in the NRT's activities related to the response, either face-to-face in a location designated by the NRT Chair or by conference call.
- b. Partial activation: Specific agencies are called upon by the NRT Chair to assist in the NRT's activities related to the response. Participation will either be face-to-face in a location designated by the NRT Chair or by conference call.

7. Who May Be Activated:

- a. The Chair may call a full or partial activation. All NRT Agencies will be notified in either case. If a partial activation is called, the Chair will designate those agencies to participate.
- b. Each agency is responsible for maintaining a current contacts list (names and 24-hour contact procedures) for its representative and alternates and providing it to the NRT Executive Secretariat.

8. What Is the Activation Process?:

Step 1. The NRT Chair considers activating the NRT based on factors listed in Section 2, above.

Step 2. The NRT Chair instructs the NRT Executive Director to notify the appropriate RRT Co-Chair(s) of the potential NRT activation and suggests that the RRT(s) activate, if they have not already done so. If the RRT(s) have activated, the NRT Executive Director obtains a summary of RRT proceedings on the incident of relevance to the NRT activation. If the RRT(s) have not activated, a conference call with the Chair and/or Vice Chair and appropriate RRT Chair(s) may precede an NRT activation.

Step 3. The NRT Chair decides to activate the NRT.

Step 4. The NRT Chair instructs the NRT Executive Director to call an activation meeting of the participating members of the NRT. The meeting may be by telephone conference call or in person.

Step 5. During the initial NRT activation meeting, the NRT Chair, as a minimum, will inform the representatives of member agencies of the following:

- (a) Reason for and background of the activation;
- (b) Status of the incident and the Federal response, as known;
- (c) Relevant RRT activities to date;
- (d) Type of activation (full or partial);
- (e) If a partial activation, the member agencies involved and reason(s) for their selection; and
- (f) The agency to chair the activated NRT.

Step 6. The NRT Chair will turn over the lead for the meeting to the chair of the activated NRT (LA).

Step 7. The Chair of the activated NRT (LA) will, as a minimum, then:

- (a) Provide specific information and/or assistance requests to other agencies;
- (b) Provide the participating member agencies with information on planned agency response actions;
- (c) Identify the Operations Center to support the activated NRT (e.g., National Response Center, EPA Emergency Operations Center, or Agency Operations Center);
- (d) Prioritize requests and establish deadlines for completion of tasks;
- (e) Provide for a method of furnishing updated information to each of the member agencies;
- (f) Provide the members of the activated NRT and the NRT Executive Director with the means to contact him/her, on a 24-hour continuous basis;
- (g) Establish a time and method (telephone or video teleconference) for the activated NRT to confer with the activated RRT and the appropriate OSC(s);
- (h) Establish a schedule for future conferences or next meeting date and method/location; and
- (i) Ensure the NRT Executive Director documents decisions made and actions taken by the NRT and the rationale for them.

Further Steps. The Chair of the activated NRT continues NRT coordination and actions, such as:

- (a) Hold meetings of the activated NRT as needed;
- (b) Communicate with the appropriate RRT(s)/OSC(s);
- (c) Act on RRT/OSC requests for support; and
- (d) Provide national-level feedback to RRT(s)/OSC(s).

9. Terminating NRT Activation:

- (a) Termination of NRT involvement may take place at the discretion of the NRT Chair, in consultation with the LA, after any assumed tasks (see Section 3, as outlined) have been completed and NRT involvement is no longer considered necessary.
- (b) Following termination of NRT involvement, the Director or the Chair of the Response Committee should request lessons learned from NRT participants in the activation and ensure these are reviewed.