About Western Canada Marine Response Corporation

Western Canada Marine Response Corp. (WCMRC) is the only Transport Canada-certified marine response organization on Canada’s West Coast. On average, we respond to 20, typically small, spills each year.

Our mandate is to ensure there is a state of preparedness in place when a marine spill occurs and to mitigate the impacts on B.C.’s coast. This includes the protection of wildlife, economic and environmental sensitivities, and the safety of both responders and the public.

WCMRC is an industry-funded organization with more than 2,300 members. Membership is mandatory for vessels of a certain size calling on Canadian ports, as well as for oil-handling facilities receiving or shipping oil across their docks.

Organization Overview

WCMRC delivers safe and effective oil spill response services on Canada’s west coast. WCMRC is certified by Transport Canada as a Response Organization (RO) under Canada’s Marine Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Regime.

WCMRC has successfully responded to oil spills for more than 40 years, starting in 1976 as Burrard Clean and became Canada’s first certified RO under the amended Canada Shipping Act in 1995.

Our mandate covers 27,000 km of BC coastline out to 200 nautical miles from shore, meaning our work is often extremely remote.

WCMRC has been exceeding the Transport Canada recommended respond standard, with an average response time of approximately 60 minutes in the Lower Mainland over the last 10 years.

We support the federal government’s Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) and share the government’s commitment to improving marine safety, responsible shipping, and to protect Canada’s marine environment. We understand the importance of doing this in partnership with Indigenous communities.

WCMRC is funded under requirements of the Canada Shipping Act that require companies with vessels calling on ports in Canada to have an arrangement with a Transport Canada certified response organization.

Members are required to pay an annual preparedness fee to ensure they will receive WCMRC’s response services, including equipment and supplies, in the event they pollute.
WCMRC’s Members

WCMRC’s membership fees cover WCMRC’s annual operating costs. They do not cover the costs WCMRC incurs when responding to a spill which, as per Canada’s Marine Liability Act, must be paid by the polluter. Profits earned by WCMRC from a spill are either reinvested in the organization or used to offset future operating costs and lower membership fees.

WCMRC’s shareholders, including Trans Mountain, Imperial, Shell Canada, Suncor and Parkland Fuels, form WCMRC’s Board of Directors and make decisions to ensure WCMRC meets the standards for response set out by Transport Canada under the Canada Shipping Act. The Board cannot influence the mandated standards or response requirements of the Transport Canada certified response organization.

WCMRC’s Members can be broken down into two categories:

**Shipping**

Shipowners of vessels 400 gross tonnes or greater, or oil tankers over 150 gross tonnes or greater, calling on Canadian ports must have a mandated agreement with WCMRC and pay annual fees to the organization in order to be members. As of February 1, 2017, WCMRC’s annual membership registration fee is $775.

**Oil Handling Facilities**

Any facility that loads or unloads oil that is transferred across the marine environment must also pay fees to WCMRC. The fees paid by oil handling facilities are determined by the Bulk Oil Cargo Fee (BOCF), which is a fee applied to each tonne of oil transferred. As of February 1, 2017, the BOCF is $1.514 per tonne. The fees paid by oil handling facilities covered approximately 85 per cent of WCMRC’s operational costs.

WCMRC as Part of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMEP)

In addition to paying the required membership fees, Trans Mountain is also currently paying a secondary fee structure to WCMRC to fund the organization’s spill response enhancements, which Trans Mountain volunteered to fund in the National Energy Board approval process of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project.

The enhancements are one of the conditions (Condition 133) the NEB placed on TMEP. The spill response enhancement program will see $150 million invested in new equipment, including 40 new vessels, and eight new response bases in the Salish Sea (figure 1). The enhancements are currently on hold as a result of the recent Federal Court ruling that quashed the TMEP Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

If completed, the enhancements will cut response times dramatically and significantly increase response capabilities along B.C.’s South Coast. The enhanced response regime will be available to all users of the local marine network. Implementation of the enhancements is expected to lead to more than 130 new full-time employment opportunities, most of which will be on Vancouver Island, where the new bases will reside.
Coastal Mapping and Geographic Response Strategies

WCMRC has developed a coastal mapping program that gathers existing data to identify coastal sensitivities including ecological, cultural and economic resources. Field teams then ground-truth the data and develop protection strategies for these at-risk resources.

The strategies, called Geographic Response Strategies (GRS’s), are entered into the mapping application, which catalogs the logistical, environmental and operational data for each GRS. In the early hours of an incident, the tool is used by response teams to geo-locate GRS’s and gather the data required to implement them. This allows for the most efficient deployment of response resources, maximizing coastal protection, reducing response times and minimizing risk.

The coastal mapping program is founded on a partnership with coastal communities. Coastal and First Nations communities can get involved in the spill response planning through a number of avenues, include providing data and hosting equipment packages.

WCMRC has developed more than 400 GRS’s for the Salish Sea (figure 2). A website that displays simplified versions of the GRS’s can be viewed at: http://coastalresponse.ca/coastal-mapping/

Figure 2
Marine Spill Response Enhancements

Figure 1