

WESTERN CANADA MARINE RESPONSE CORPORATION

Accessibility Plan

2024 - 2027

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. General

1.1 Land Acknowledgement.....	4
1.2 Message from the President.....	5
1.3 Message from the General Manager.....	6
1.4 About Western Canada Marine Response Corporation	7
1.5 Consultations & Key Contributors.....	7

2. Introduction

2.1 Executive Summary	9
2.2 Feedback	10

3. Framework

3.1 Accessible Canada Act Principles	11
3.2 Accessible Canada Regulations	11
3.3 WCMRC Accessibility Statement.....	12
3.4 Definitions	13

4. Accessible Canada Act Regulatory Area

4.1 Employment.....	14
4.2 The Built Environment	16
4.3 Information and Communication Technologies	19

4.4 Other Communication	21
4.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities	23
4.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services	24
4.7 Transportation	25

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion	28
----------------------	----

1. GENERAL

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

WCMRC acknowledges we live and work on First Nations' traditional territories throughout British Columbia's coast and are grateful to carry out our work on these waters and lands. We recognize and honour the rich cultural heritage the deep connections that Indigenous peoples have with the land, water, and marine resources. We commit to fostering respectful relationships, supporting reconciliation efforts, and working collaboratively with Indigenous communities. We express our gratitude for the stewardship of these lands and waters by Indigenous peoples for countless generations. May we continue to learn, listen, and engage in meaningful dialogue as we navigate our business operations in this beautiful and diverse region.

1.2 Message from the President

Welcome to the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation Accessibility Plan

On behalf of the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC), I am pleased to welcome you to our Accessibility Plan. At WCMRC, we are firmly committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) workplace where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute their talents.

This Accessibility Plan represents a significant step forward on our journey toward achieving a fully accessible work environment. It outlines our commitment to meeting the high standards set out by the *Accessible Canada Act*, ensuring equal opportunities and participation for all employees, regardless of their abilities.

This plan is not the destination, but the beginning. One of our corporate values is continuous improvement and we acknowledge that there is always more to learn and improve upon. We are committed to ongoing collaboration with our employees, stakeholders, and the disability community to identify and remove barriers. We will continuously strive to improve accessibility in all aspects of our workplace, from physical spaces to communication methods and employment practices.

This plan details our goals and strategies for creating a truly inclusive environment. We encourage you to explore its contents and learn more about the steps we are taking to ensure accessibility for all at WCMRC. If you have any questions, feedback, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out. We value your input and are committed to working together to build a more accessible future for everyone at WCMRC.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gardner
President, Western Canada Marine Response Corporation

1.3 Message from the General Manager

A Commitment to Accessibility at WCMRC

As General Manager of Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC), I am thrilled to introduce our Accessibility Plan. Here at WCMRC we foster a workplace that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI). We believe in creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique skills and perspectives.

This Accessibility Plan signifies a crucial step on our path to a fully accessible workplace. It outlines our commitment to adhere to the *Accessible Canada Act*. This initial WCMRC Accessibility Plan represents significant progress over the last few years as our company grew, but it is merely the beginning. We recognize there is always room to learn, adapt, and improve. We are dedicated to ongoing collaboration with our employees, and all stakeholders, to identify and eliminate barriers. We will continuously strive to make accessibility a priority across all facets of our workplace, from physical spaces to communication strategies and employment practices as it matched with our organizations core value of “safety first”.

Sincerely,

Dave Merrick

General Manager, Western Canada Marine Response Corporation

1.4 About Western Canada Marine Response Corporation

Western Canada Marine Response Corporation (WCMRC) is the only Transport Canada-certified marine response organization on Canada's West Coast. On average, we respond to 20 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.

At WCMRC we consistently work to improve and expand our operations to exceed global standards and deliver advanced marine spill response.

Our on-water operations form the core of our organization. WCMRC's Operations team conducts continuous training and equipment maintenance to ensure ready-state response capability. In the event of a marine spill, our vessels and personnel are on-scene managing the recovery.

WCMRC's Response Readiness Team (RRT) supports the Operations department's ability to respond quickly and effectively to spills. The RRT creates and manages localized environmental protection strategies through ongoing field work, regularly reviews and updates our spill response plans, and manages key coastal partnerships through our [Coastal Response Program](#).

WCMRC can also support in select response roles beyond on-water recovery and cleanup. This could include managing and staffing the Incident Command Post and training personnel in incident management.

1.5 Consultations & Key Contributors

Developing this Accessibility Plan involved a comprehensive approach that gathered valuable insights from a variety of sources:

- **Employee Engagement:** Targeted surveys and dedicated meetings with staff revealed a clear message: while many of our jobs require physical fitness, a significant concern lies with supporting colleagues experiencing hidden disabilities, particularly mental health challenges.
- **Stakeholder Input:** We actively sought feedback from management teams, received direct emails and had open conversations with organization members to ensure a well-rounded perspective.

- **Expert Guidance:** In collaboration with a consultant specializing in accessibility best practices, we need to focus on strategies to address both physical, and invisible disabilities including mental health accessibility needs.
- **Community Collaboration:** We fostered relationships with accessibility associations, tapping into their expertise and resources. This further informed our approach needed to address hidden disabilities, specifically mental health support in the workplace.
- **Industry Learning:** Participation in accessibility conferences and workshops provided valuable insights into best practices for creating a workplace that supports all employees including any associates with physical or invisible accessibility needs.
- **Extensive Research:** We conducted thorough research to supplement our knowledge and gain a comprehensive understanding of hidden disabilities, with a particular focus on mental health in the workplace.

This multi-faceted approach ensured that the key contributions of all stakeholders were incorporated into the plan, resulting in a focus on both physical and invisible (including mental health) accessibility.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Executive Summary

WCMRC's Commitment to a Barrier-Free Workplace

In accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act*, WCMRC is proud to unveil its comprehensive accessibility plan, aimed at ensuring equal participation and inclusion for all. As Canada's largest marine spill response organization, WCMRC recognizes the importance of removing barriers and fostering a more accessible environment.

The *Accessible Canada Act*, enacted in 2019, represents a significant milestone in advancing accessibility rights across the country. Rooted in the principles of equality and human rights, this federal legislation seeks to eliminate barriers faced by persons with disabilities. It applies to organizations under federal jurisdiction, including WCMRC, and sets out clear guidelines for achieving a barrier-free Canada by January 1, 2040.

WCMRC's core mandate, as defined by the Canada *Transportation Act*, is to respond swiftly and effectively to marine oil spills along British Columbia's extensive coastline. Our responsibilities extend beyond spill containment; we prioritize the protection of wildlife, economic interests, environmental sensitivities, and the safety of responders and the public. Now, with the *Accessible Canada Act* as our guiding framework, we are taking proactive steps to enhance accessibility across our operations.

In alignment with our commitment to accessibility, WCMRC is launching its comprehensive accessibility plan in 2024. This plan outlines specific strategies, initiatives, and targets to ensure that our services, facilities, and communication channels are fully accessible to everyone. By collaborating with coastal communities, leveraging innovative technologies, and adhering to best practices, we aim to create an inclusive environment that leaves no one behind.

Our accessibility plan addresses several priority areas, including:

- **Employment:** Ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities within our workforce.
- **Built Environment:** Enhancing physical accessibility in our facilities and public spaces.
- **Information and Communication Technologies:** Making our digital platforms and communication channels accessible.
- **Goods, Services, and Facilities:** Removing barriers in procurement and service delivery.

- Program Design and Delivery: Ensuring that our programs and services accommodate diverse needs.
- Transportation: Improving accessibility in marine transportation.

As we embark on this transformative journey, WCMRC remains committed to fostering a barrier-free Canada. Our accessibility plan reflects our dedication to inclusivity, and we invite all stakeholders to join us in creating a more accessible and equitable future.

2.2 Feedback

For more information about WCMRC and its initiatives, you can visit their official website at: <https://wcmrc.com/> or hyperlink: [Western Canada Marine Response Corporation \(WCMRC\)](#) .

For feedback specifically related to our Accessibility Plan, we welcome you to connect with us through any of the following.

Mail:

Accessibility Plan Feedback
Western Canada Marine Response Corporation Head Office
3500 Gilmore Way, Unit 206
Burnaby, BC V5G 4W7

Phone:

Tel: 604.294.6001
Fax: 604.294.6003

Email:

General Accessibility Inquiries:
accessibility@wcmrc.com or
media@wcmrc.com

Direct Accessibility Inquiries:

Lincoln Heaney
Manager, Human Resources
250-510-7738
lincolnh@wcmrc.com

3. FRAMEWORK

3.1 Accessible Canada Act Principles

The purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to ensure a barrier-free Canada. The main purpose as stated in Section 5 of the Act “is to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities through the realization, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, of a Canada without barriers, on or before January 1, 2040, particularly by the identification and removal of barriers, and the prevention of new barriers, in the following areas:

- a. employment,
- b. the built environment,
- c. information and communication technologies,
 - c1. communication, other than information and communication technologies,
- d. the procurement of goods, services, and facilities,
- e. the design and delivery of programs and services,
- f. transportation; and
- g. areas designated under regulations made under paragraph 117(1)(b).

The *Accessible Canada Act* principles can be summarized by stating that everyone in Canada has:

- **Dignity:** Everyone must be treated with dignity.
- **Opportunities:** Everyone must have the same opportunity to build the life they want.
- **Barrier-free access:** Everyone must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society.

3.2 Accessible Canada Regulations

Passed in 2019, the intent of the *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. The Accessible Canada Regulations (ACR) came into effect in December 2021. The ACR sets out the rules that federally regulated entities must follow regarding publishing accessibility plans, setting up feedback procedures, and development of progress and monitoring reports. The ACA requires those

working in federally regulated sectors to report their policies and practices in relation to identifying and removing existing and future (including prevention) of any barriers within their organization.

3.3 WCMRC Accessibility Statement

WCMRC Accessibility is embedded into our company's overall Diversity & Inclusion philosophy. It states that in addition to WCMRC's Respectful Workplace policy, WCMRC is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity and inclusion. Our human capital is the most valuable asset we have. The collective sum of the individual differences, life experiences, knowledge, unique capabilities, and talent that our employees invest in their work represents a significant part of our culture.

We embrace and encourage our employees' differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

WCMRC's diversity initiatives are applicable to our practices and policies on recruitment and selection and a work environment built on the premise of employment equity that encourages and enforces:

- Respectful communication and cooperation between all employees.
- Teamwork and employee participation, permitting the representation of all groups and employee perspectives.
- Work/life balance to accommodate employees' varying needs.
- Employer and employee contributions to the communities we serve to promote a greater understanding and respect for their diversity.

Everyone at WCMRC has a role to play in supporting our commitment to diversity and inclusion and an overall responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect in a fair and non-discriminatory manner and are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion during work, at work functions on or off the job. Employees who believe they have been subjected to any kind of discrimination that conflicts with WCMRC's Respectful Workplace or Diversity policies should seek assistance from their supervisor or an HR representative. Employees who have exhibited inappropriate conduct or behaviour in contravention of applicable legislation or WCMRC's policies may be subject to disciplinary action.

3.4 Definitions

Accessibility: Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities.

Barrier: A barrier is a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people apart. For people with disabilities, barriers can take many forms including attitudinal, communication, physical, policy, programmatic, social, and transportation.

Disability: A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

The definitions above were provided from Accessibility Services Canada website at:
<https://accessibilitycanada.ca/get-help/definitions/>.

4. ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT REGULATORY AREAS

4.1 Employment

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of the Employment section is to ensure access to employment opportunities and accessible workplaces. Workplaces, (including WCMRC), need to ensure that their workforce is diverse, which includes people with disabilities, both visible and invisible, is inclusive and an environment that is barrier-free.



Figure 4.1 Spill Response Technicians while on duty on a vessel.

WCMRC Objective

Our talent and recruitment philosophy at WCMRC is that we believe that our people are the heart of our organization. Our mission is to deliver safe and effective oil spill response services within the province of British Columbia, ensuring the protection of our coastal environment. We are committed to fostering a workplace where individuals thrive, safety is paramount, and collaboration drives success.

We believe that putting our values into practice creates long term benefits for our employees, shareholders, stakeholders, suppliers, and the communities we serve. We value:

- Safety and Readiness.
- Open and honest communication that fosters a climate of trust.
- Integrity in everything we do.
- Protecting the environment.
- Continuous improvement through competency, creativity, efficiency and teamwork.
- Celebrating individual and team successes.

Why Work at WCMRC?

- **Impactful Work:** Joining WCMRC means contributing to the preservation of our coastal ecosystems. Our actions directly mitigate the impacts of marine spills, protecting wildlife, economic interests, and public safety.
- **Safety First:** Safety is not just a priority; it's our way of life. No task is so urgent that we compromise safety. We invest in thorough safety training to prevent accidents and ensure the well-being of our team.
- **Collaborative Environment:** At WCMRC, everyone works together towards a shared goal. Our team members support one another, fostering a positive and inclusive workplace.
- **Talented Colleagues:** Our people are great! We attract skilled professionals who are passionate about environmental protection. Join a community of experts who make a difference.
- **Work-Life Balance:** We understand the importance of balance. WCMRC promotes a healthy work-life equilibrium, allowing our team members to recharge and thrive both personally and professionally.

In summary, WCMRC offers a fulfilling career where competence, creativity, and teamwork intersect with a commitment to environmental protection. Join us in safeguarding British Columbia's pristine coastline!

Where we are

In the last 5 years WCMRC has had a massive expansion which has enabled us to increase our headcount and grow the team. Going from 3 Bases (North Coast, South Coast and Vancouver Island), we now have

bases in Prince Rupert, Beecher Bay, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Sidney, Vancouver, Richmond, Coquitlam and Burnaby (Corporate Office). This grew our team from 83 to just over 200 people.

It is those differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make our employees unique.

What we need to work on

There are several key opportunities that WCMRC continues to work on when it comes to accessibility and employment:

- **Commitment 1** – Continued training and awareness on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Commitment 2** – Increase engagement within our EDI committee and throughout the organization.
- **Commitment 3** – Increase our opportunities to hire female and First Nations in marine related operational roles.

4.2 The Build Environment

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of this section is to ensure all people both internal and external can move around freely in federal buildings and public spaces. For WCMRC Accessibility Plan, vessels will be covered in the Transportation section.



Figure 4.2.1 (left) – Vancouver Harbour Base



Figure 4.2.2 (right) – Nanaimo Base

WCMRC Objective

At Western Canada Marine Response Corporation's our commitment to safeguarding the marine environment is reflected in the strategic selection of our locations. Each of our facilities is situated on leased land, in collaboration with our valued partners. These locations have been chosen with great care to align with our mission and to ensure optimal response capabilities.

Our partners are more than just landlords; they are integral contributors to our readiness and preparedness. Together, we work towards a common goal - to protect the marine environment of Western Canada's Coastlines. This partnership is a testament to our tagline: "Ready Today. Prepared for Tomorrow."

We believe that by choosing the right locations and building strong partnerships, we can continue to be at the forefront of marine response, today and into the future.

Where we are

Starting as an industry cooperative named Burrard Clean Operations handling marine incidents in Vancouver Harbour in 1976, WCMRC was formed in 1995 when the federal government introduced amendments to the *Canada Shipping Act*. In 2013, with the announcement of the Trans Mountain expansion, WCMRC built environment changed to better enhance oil spill response preparedness.

Currently, our geographic area of response covers all 27,000 km of Western Canada's coastline, extending to the 200 nautical mile limit. Our response area also includes all inland navigable waters in coastal British Columbia. Our build environment includes having bases, personnel and equipment caches stationed at strategic locations up and down the coast. Figure 1.0 below outlines our current bases.

WCMRC also has its Corporate Head Office in Burnaby, BC and an Operations Office and Warehouse in Coquitlam.

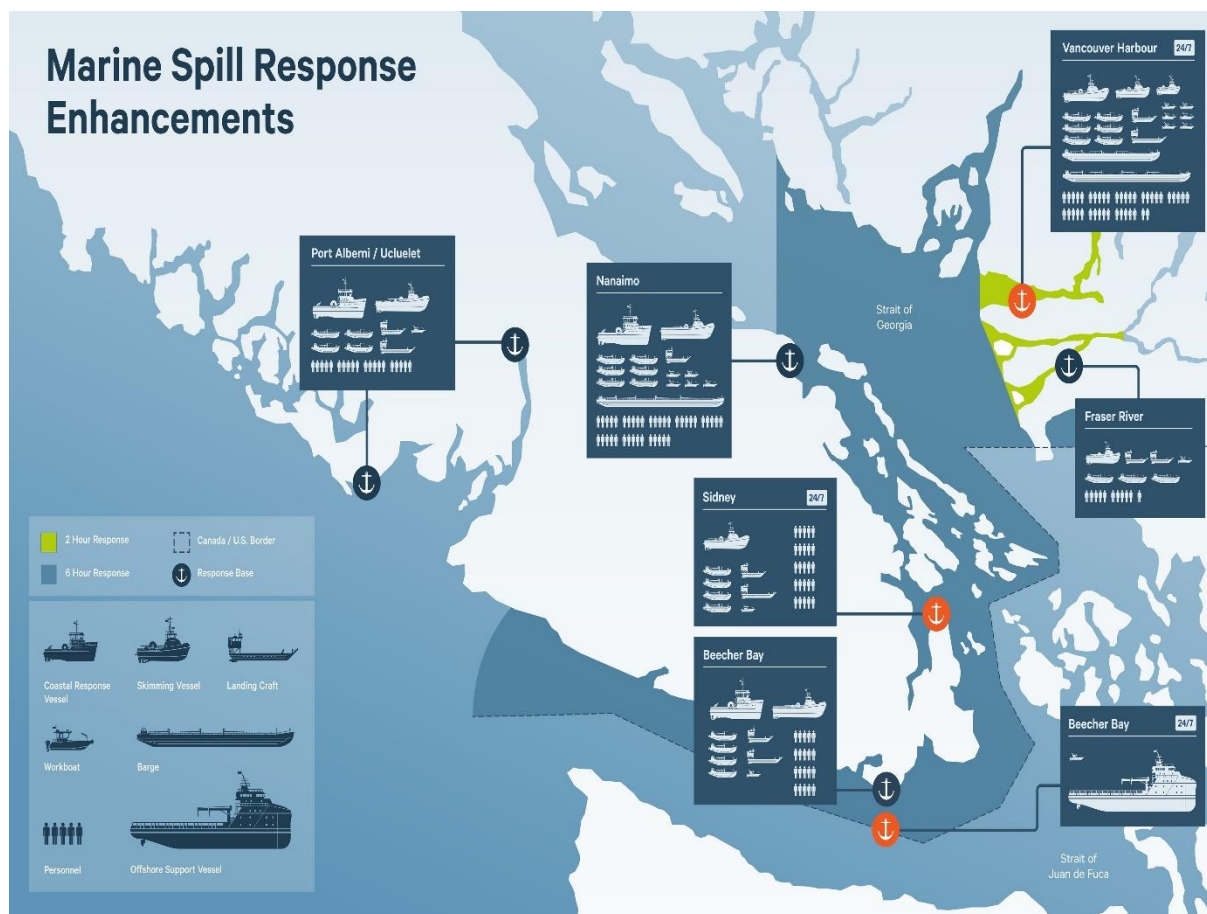


Figure 1.3 – Location of WCMRC bases. (Operational and Head office not included.)

At our head office and operations office many considerations were made with selecting the location and spaces. The ability to have space for all people regardless of disability was considered. Accessibility to get to your workspace is not a concern. The workspace itself is spacious. Washrooms and staff break rooms, including placements of material have all been factored into the layout and design.

At our bases, we have begun to look at our accessibility practices with the majority of our bases now having fully barrier-free ground floors. Again, this includes washroom and shower facilities, and staff break room areas.

What we need to work on

While our spaces and built environments ensure that all people both internal and external can move around freely, there are always opportunities for continuous improvement.

- **Commitment 1** – Continued training and awareness on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Commitment 2** – Work with our lease-providers about additional technologies to reduce accessibility concerns. This includes push button door openers (and where we own the spaces), modifying curb side construction, to looking at new leases when opportunities arise.
- **Commitment 3** – Engage in discussion where base locations with second floors with limited access have alternative workspaces and meeting space capabilities.

4.3 Information and Communication Technologies

Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies or ICT includes hardware, software, applications, and websites for both external and internal facing systems for all stakeholders of the organization.

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of the Information and Communication Technologies section is to ensure accessibility to all users of digital content and technologies. to employment opportunities and accessible workplaces.

WCMRC Objective

Our goal at WCMRC is to ensure that all our information and communication technologies are accessible to both internal team member and all external stakeholders. Aligning to our mission to safeguard Canada's Westcoast from marine incidents and mitigate their impact, we will prioritize accessible ICT.

At WCMRC, we can enhance inclusivity, improve communication, and foster trust among all users. Our plan includes:

1. Ensure that email and internet resources used within WCMRC are directly related to the organization's benefit.
2. Educate users about the legal and policy implications of email communication and document sharing.
3. Prevent disruptions to WCMRC's activities caused by inappropriate use of email and internet services.
4. Provide clear guidelines on confidentiality, privacy, and acceptable use of WCMRC's internet and email.



Figure 4.3.1 – Satellite Radios

5. Safeguard company information and data from unauthorized access.
6. Protect company-owned hardware from loss or damage.



Figure 4.3.2 – Incident Command Post at Emergency Response location.

Where we are

WCMRC has a strong information technology policy that governs all use of WCMRCs information technology hardware, software, network, internet/intranet and email and instant messaging systems.

Our team members sign off agreeing and adhering to the policies and procedures related to ICT. These includes that all team members using ICT are required to respect the rights of other users, the integrity of the system and related physical resources, including, but not limited to, hardware, software, servers, etc.

Use of the internet, intranet, email, instant messaging, and any other forms of electronic communications must be consistent with WCMRC policies and procedures of ethical conduct, respectful workplace, social media, and safety. In addition, network and internet/intranet use must comply with applicable laws.

All employees have their own unique usernames and passwords for all WCMRC system that they require.

What we need to work on

- **Commitment 1** – Conduct regular reviews of our systems and platforms to assess what improvements, changes or enhancements could be made to improve our system for all users. This includes evaluations of new applications, hardware etc.
- **Commitment 2** – Continue to strengthen our team’s knowledge on ICT. This includes training on the use of ICT, understanding the importance of personal information, the Privacy Act, PIPEDA as to how breach can occur with ICT.
- **Commitment 3** – As technology continues to evolve, we will look at housing all our data, moving from a traditional network-based system to a secure cloud-based platform.

4.4 Other Communication

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of this section on is to ensure that all persons with disabilities have access to information from the organization in a barrier-free manner.

WCMRC Objective

The WCMRC recognizes the ever-changing work environment and is committed to continuously improving the accessibility of all communication methods to be inclusive for people with disabilities.

Where we are

While we have begun this part of our accessibility journey, we recognize that it is still an area that has a lot of opportunity for continuous improvement. There are several communication channels outside of technology itself that has improved the last couple of years within the organization. They include:

- Working schedules and dates to better adapt to evolving workstyles, including hybrid, compressed work weeks, etc.
- Ability to use technology to host virtual meetings, conferences, and celebrations.
- Use of features such as close caption and transcription during both virtual and in-person meetings.

- Multichannel mechanisms such as phone, in-person, email, online forms, etc. so that all persons can communicate to the organization.

One strength that WCMRC continues to strive for is the use of plain language in our communication. This ensures that everyone can understand the information regardless of their level reading. This aligns with the core value of safety first.



Figure 4.4.1 – Corporate team members at Head Office.

What we need to work on

- **Commitment 1** – Research other accessible channels on how meetings and information can be shared with all persons including those with visible and invisible disabilities. This could include offering alternative formats for materials (e.g., Braille, large print), allowing for sign language interpretation, or providing options for remote participation, where necessary.

- **Commitment 2** – Imagery and infographics used in presentations or documents should be clear and include captions or audio descriptions for people with visual impairments. This includes making documents available in accessible formats like electronic text suitable for screen readers.
- **Commitment 3** – Incorporate methods for people to provide feedback that do not rely on technology. This might include comment boxes, suggestion forms, or toll-free phone numbers.

4.5 The Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of the procurement of goods, services and facilities is to ensure accessible workplaces material for all users.

WCMRC Objective

The WCMRC is committed to creating a fully accessible environment for everyone. We will achieve this objective by integrating accessibility considerations throughout our procurement process for goods, services, and facilities.

Where we are

Western Canada Marine Response Corporation has a strong approach to procurement. We have strong policies and procedures when it comes to finding and selecting vendors for all goods, services, and facilities. Moving forward, the opportunity is to add the mindset of accessibility into our approach and current practices.

What we need to work on

As mentioned, WCMRC can take its current procurement practices and work on the following:

- **Commitment 1** – Accessibility will be a consideration throughout the development process for both requirements and design at WCMRC.
- **Commitment 2** – When selecting vendors for products or services with an accessibility component, WCMRC prioritizes vendors who demonstrate a proven track record and experience in accessibility solutions.
- **Commitment 3** – Training and education on accessibility considerations for managers, and operational support departments. This will ensure staff can effectively evaluate accessibility features during the procurement process.

- **Commitment 4** – Monitoring and review our procurement practices to ensure continuous improvement in acquiring accessible goods, services, and facilities.

Through this objective, the WCMRC aims to build a more inclusive environment by proactively considering accessibility during procurement. This will benefit everyone at WCMRC and demonstrate our commitment to social responsibility.

4.6 The Design and Delivery of Programs and Services

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of the design and deliver of the program and services is to ensure access to all that interact with the organization.



Figure 4.6.1 – The graduating cohort from our recent Leadership Essential course.

WCMRC Objective

The WCMRC recognizes the critical role of accessibility in ensuring a diverse and qualified workforce for marine spill response. We are committed to designing and delivering programs and services that are inclusive for people with disabilities, while acknowledging the essential physical requirements of our first responders and operational team members. WCMRC will place a strong focus on ensuring that our design and delivery of programs and services factors into how we provide our services and products.

Where we are

WCMRC strives to build a more inclusive workforce capable of effectively responding to marine oil spills and our approach aims to balance accessibility with the demands of emergency response while ensuring the safety and well-being of all team members, communities, the public and the wildlife.

Prior to embarking on creating an accessibility plan, WCMRC made steps forward to improve diversity and inclusion within our organization. Initiatives such as conducting surveys, starting a DEI Committee, awareness training are examples of these initiatives. Understanding the balance between the nature of our business and accessibility continues to be a conversation as multiple levels of the organization on how to continue to make our work environment barrier-free for everyone.



Figure 4.6.2 –Spill Response Team in action.

What we need to work on

There are many areas that WCMRC continues to explore when it comes to accessibility in our first accessibility plan. The areas that we would like to continue to research over the next 3 years included but are not limited to:

Commitment 1 – Education, Training and Awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (accessibility) for all employees within the organization.

Commitment 2 – Explore technologies that would assist the business in becoming more inclusive and barrier-free. This includes options and upgrades with existing

platforms, new software as well as on technology options such as ASL, visuals, etc.

Commitment 3 – Partnerships & Collaboration with accessibility related organizations. Research, network, attend learning events and conferences with organization within this space that can offer support and can be benchmarked with.

4.7 Transportation

Introduction

Under the *Accessible Canada Act*, the goal of the Transportation portion is to identify, remove and prevent barriers in the transportation services of the organization for people with disabilities.

WCMRC Objective

At Western Canada Marine Response Corporation, our commitment to safeguarding the marine environment is evident in the strategic selection and placement of our transportation vessels and vehicles. These resources are positioned at key locations along the Western Coastline, ensuring a rapid response in collaboration with our team and the communities we serve.

Where we are

WCMRC's capacity to respond to spills is supported by our ability to implement cutting-edge technologies and equipment in our training and operations. In addition to our growing fleet of 88 spill response vessels, we employ the latest response equipment, such as fuzzy-disk skimmers and Current Busters, as well as new technologies like infrared cameras and drones (submersible and aerial).

Western Canada Marine Response Corporation maintains a growing fleet of emergency response vessels, strategically chosen for diverse situations. This includes custom-built oil spill response vessels, deck, and tank barges for critical equipment transport, landing craft for efficient shore access, skiffs for swift maneuverability, and workboats for versatile operations. Most of our vessels have gender neutral bathrooms and our larger vessels have private accommodations for all genders. This is not often the case in the marine industry.

The following consideration are made when selecting vessels for our operations:

- **Specificity:** Details the functionalities of each vessel type (oil spill response, equipment transport, etc.).
- **Strategic Selection:** Emphasizes the strategic choice of vessels for diverse situations.
- **Flow and Readability:** Improves sentence structure for better reading experience.



Figure 4.7.1 –Sample of vessels operated by WCMRC for Marine Emergency Response.

We also boast a versatile fleet of vehicles to effectively support our operations. This includes plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (EVs) for eco-conscious operations, sedans and SUVs for efficient transportation, and heavy-duty trucks and flatbeds for tackling demanding tasks. When selecting to lease or purchase a vehicle, the following factors are considered:

- **Versatility:** Emphasizes the range of vehicles for various needs.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Mentions EVs for a sustainable approach.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Highlights sedans and SUVs for practicality.
- **Heavy-Duty Capacity:** Includes trucks and flatbeds for handling challenging situations.

What we need to work on

- **Commitment 1** – Inclusive training and support for all crew. Implement comprehensive disability awareness training for all WCMRC crew members. This training will equip them with the knowledge and skills to provide safe and effective assistance to individuals with disabilities during emergencies responses. We'll also explore support services like sign language interpretation for crew briefings and communication with affected communities when appropriate and required*.
- **Commitment 2** – Accessibility Initiatives for Vessels and Vehicles. We will launch a comprehensive program to improve accessibility for everyone using our vessels and vehicles. This includes a review of our current accessibility practices and outlining feasible solutions including integration of features in future purchases and retrofitting existing options for those with visible physical limitations. *

**Western Canada Marine Response Corporation is committed to a diverse and inclusive workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for all qualified individuals. While some emergency response roles may require specific physical abilities, we conduct a thorough and individualized assessment based on essential job functions. This ensures that all qualified applicants, regardless of disability, have a fair chance to be considered for these critical positions.*

5. Conclusion

WCMRC's commitment to accessibility extends beyond the launch of this comprehensive plan. Over the past few years, we have proactively implemented several initiatives that laid the groundwork for a more inclusive future. These include:

- **Accessibility awareness training** for staff at all levels to foster a culture of understanding and inclusion.
- **Reviews of existing facilities** to identify and prioritize accessibility upgrades.
- **Procurement practices** that consider accessibility features when acquiring goods and services.
- **Early engagement with disability rights organizations** to gain valuable insights and perspectives.

The launch of this accessibility plan signifies a significant step forward in our journey towards a fully inclusive organization. We are confident that the strategies outlined within this document will serve as a roadmap to achieving our accessibility goals by 2040, as mandated by the *Accessible Canada Act*.

However, we recognize that accessibility is an ongoing process. We are committed to continually monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our plan, seeking continuous improvement through ongoing stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms. We are eager to collaborate with our employees, coastal communities, disability rights organizations, and all relevant stakeholders to identify new opportunities for removing barriers and fostering a truly inclusive environment.

At WCMRC, we believe that an accessible workplace will benefit everyone. By creating a more inclusive environment, we foster a diversity of thought, talent, and experience, ultimately strengthening our capacity to fulfill our critical mandate of protecting Canada's West Coast. We are excited to embark on this transformative journey, and we look forward to building a barrier-free future.