



Responding to Oil Spills in the U.S. Arctic Marine Environment

Committee on Responding to Oil Spills in the U.S. Arctic Marine Environment, Ocean Studies Board, Polar Research Board, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Marine Board, Transportation Research Board, National Research Council

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U.S. Arctic waters north of the Bering Strait and west of the Canadian border encompass a vast area that is usually ice covered for much of the year, but is increasingly experiencing longer periods and larger areas of open water due to climate change. Sparsely inhabited with a wide variety of ecosystems found nowhere else, this region is vulnerable to damage from human activities. As oil and gas, shipping, and tourism activities increase, the possibilities of an oil spill also increase. How can we best prepare to respond to such an event in this challenging environment?

Responding to Oil Spills in the U.S. Arctic Marine Environment reviews the current state of the science regarding oil spill response and environmental assessment in the Arctic region north of the Bering Strait, with emphasis on the potential impacts in U.S. waters. This report describes the unique ecosystems and environment of the Arctic and makes recommendations to provide an effective response effort in these challenging conditions. According to *Responding to Oil Spills in the U.S. Arctic Marine Environment*, a full range of proven oil spill response technologies is needed in order to minimize the impacts on people and sensitive ecosystems. This report identifies key oil spill research priorities, critical data and monitoring needs, mitigation strategies, and important operational and logistical issues.

The Arctic acts as an integrating, regulating, and mediating component of the physical, atmospheric and cryospheric systems that govern life on Earth. Not only does the Arctic serve as regulator of many of the Earth's large-scale systems and processes, but it is also an area where choices made have substantial impact on life and choices everywhere on planet Earth. This report's recommendations will assist environmentalists, industry, state and local policymakers, and anyone interested in the future of this special region to preserve and protect it from damaging oil spills.

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