

PROTOCOL FOR DEM RESPONSE TO A REPORT OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENT ON NARRAGANSETT BAY (BART)

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to guide RI DEM staff in responding to a report of an actual or expected environmental emergency.

Background

DEM is responsible for responding to incidents that threaten the environment and the health and safety of the public in RI. The larger the potential impact of the incident (including public concern that it is likely to attract), the more urgent the response should be. DEM will respond to all reports of actual or expected environmental emergencies.

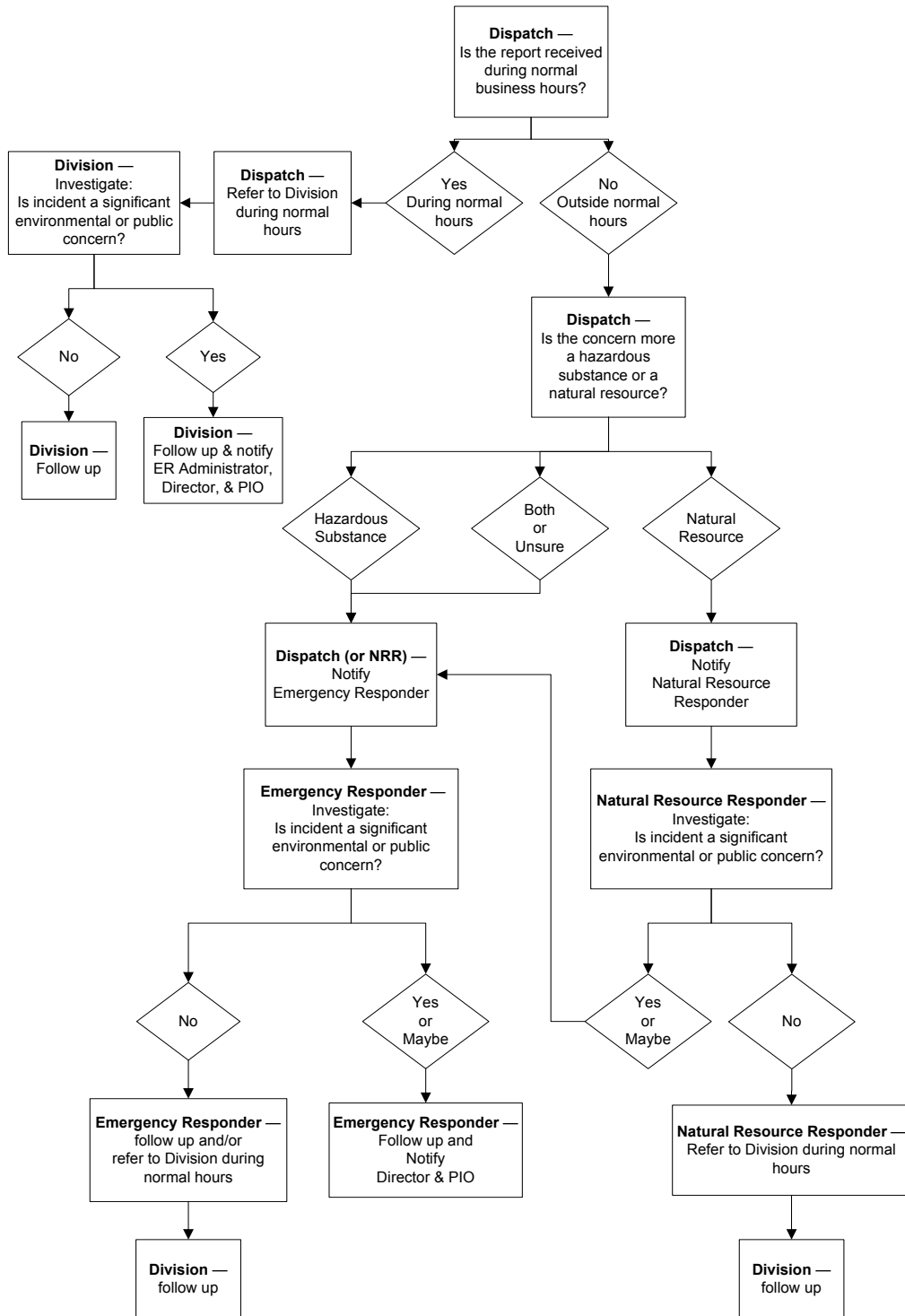
Familiarity with DEM, the environment, and the public is apt to be helpful to anyone fielding such a report, and the challenge is likely to increase during complex or multiple, simultaneous incidents. Incidents with a potential for large impacts must initiate a rapid response, with a potential to incorporate not only several divisions of DEM but also Local, State, and Federal support agencies and contractors. Response to less severe incidents or false alarms may be postponed till normal business hours. Given limited resources, a too aggressive response to one incident can compromise capacity to respond to subsequent ones that may be more severe.

This protocol is designed to engage as rapidly as possible DEM staff who will initiate the appropriate response to an incident report.

Participants and Responsibilities

- **Dispatcher** – the DEM point of initial contact and referral. During normal business hours, news of an environmental incident may reach DEM through a large number of contact points (e.g., face-to-face with staff on a DEM property or via a call to the Office of Customer and Technical Assistance, the Environmental Police Hot Line, or one of DEM's many other offices). At night, on holidays, and weekends, the most dependable point of contact for DEM is through the 24-hour Hot Line (222-3070). The dispatcher will bring the incident report to the attention of the appropriate DEM responder – an Environmental Police Officer (EPO), the Emergency Responder, or the Natural Resource Responder.
- **Emergency Responder** – the on-call member of the DEM Office of Emergency Response. The Emergency Responder will investigate and take appropriate action when a report indicates an actual or potential release of hazardous substances (chemical, biological, radioactive) into the State environment. The Emergency Responder may authorize emergency actions, engage contractors and/or other levels and agencies of government. If the incident or public concern may be severe, the Emergency Responder will notify the Director.
- **Natural Resource Responder** – the on-call member of the DEM Division of Natural Resources. The Natural Resource Responder will investigate and take appropriate action when a report indicates an actual or potential threat to State fish and wildlife. If the incident or public concern may be severe, the Natural Resource Responder will contact the Emergency Responder.
- **Director** – the on-call member of the Office of the Director. The Director may authorize emergency actions and coordinate relations with other levels and agencies of government. The Director may engage the Public Information Officer.
- **Public Information Officer** – the on-call member of the Office of Communications and Media Relations. Upon request of the Director, the PIO will collect and appropriately disseminate information about the incident (e.g., issue press releases).
- **Division** – DEM personnel who provide relevant services during normal business hours. Staff will provide the service assigned to their office or division and alert other DEM offices or divisions, when appropriate.

Incidence Response Flowchart:



Investigation Priorities

In responding to emergencies DEM aims to minimize threats to public health, safety, and the environment and to provide the public with prompt, reliable information about significant risks that remain. Toward that end, investigators should aim to determine and then to report (as detailed above) their best answers to the following questions:

- What is the scale of the incident? For example:
 - How large is the impacted area?
 - In a spill, what is the estimated volume and toxicity of pollutant that has been released?
 - How much wildlife or biomass – as indicated in transects – has been injured and lost?)
- What seems to be the cause of the incident?
- Have hazardous materials or waste, biotoxins, or other threats to public health and safety been released?
- Is cleanup possible and desirable?
- If impacts are or are likely to be significant (“moderate” or “severe”), have appropriate samples of all relevant media been taken, documented, and preserved with proper chain of custody?
- What further monitoring or analysis is recommended?

Points of Contact in DEM:

General information (Customer and Technical Assistance): 222-6800

24-hour Hot Line (Law Enforcement): 222-3070

Bay Line: 222-8888

Emergency Response: 222-1360 or (after hours) 222-3070

Compliance and Inspection: 222-1360 or (after hours) 222-3070