



# Marine Safety Information Bulletin

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## Release of New Coastal Zone Area Contingency Plan Architecture

The U.S. Coast Guard announces the release of a new Area Contingency Plan (ACP) architecture for ACPs covering the coastal zones of the United States and its territories. This new architecture represents the first major overhaul of ACP structure in over 25 years. ACPs are required by the Clean Water Act and are a critical component of the tiered system of planning and response known as the National Response System (NRS). ACPs encompass response planning for oil and hazardous substance incidents at the local (area) level and are managed and approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for coastal zones (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency manages and approves ACPs that serve the inland zones).

This architecture was derived from several years of internal and external collaboration, focus groups, a national survey, and field testing. The draft architecture was posted on the Federal Register for 60 days from December 2022-January 2023 to solicit for public comments. All comments were adjudicated by a panel of subject matter experts and the revisions were incorporated into the final version.

The U.S. Coast Guard's overall objective is to modernize coastal ACPs, improve usability and operationalization, and attain national consistency in the face of a dynamic risk landscape within the broader Maritime Transportation System (MTS). This new, standardized construct will better enable industry plan writers of vessel and facility response plans with multiple, diverse operating areas to consistently align with Coast Guard approved ACPs. Alignment of industry response plans and ACPs is a central tenet of the NRS. A more standardized approach will also minimize confusion due to highly variable ACP structure and content and facilitate a more efficient response, especially large-scale responses requiring mobilization of personnel and resources from outside a particular area or region. Additionally, adopting a nationally consistent architecture will facilitate the Coast Guard's development of a modern, mobile based ACP product for field responders.

The U.S. Coast Guard will be working with all coastal Area Committees to transition to this new architecture. It is expected that full transition of all coastal ACPs into to this architecture will be completed by October 2026.

Note that the new architecture is macro level only, and that the U.S. Coast Guard recognizes that some degree of local variability is expected. The U.S. Coast Guard will continue to advance additional, more detailed policy guidance supporting this new ACP architecture.

**The new architecture can be found on the U.S. Coast Guard's Homeport site:**

<https://homeport.uscg.mil/missions/environmental/area-contingency-plans>

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