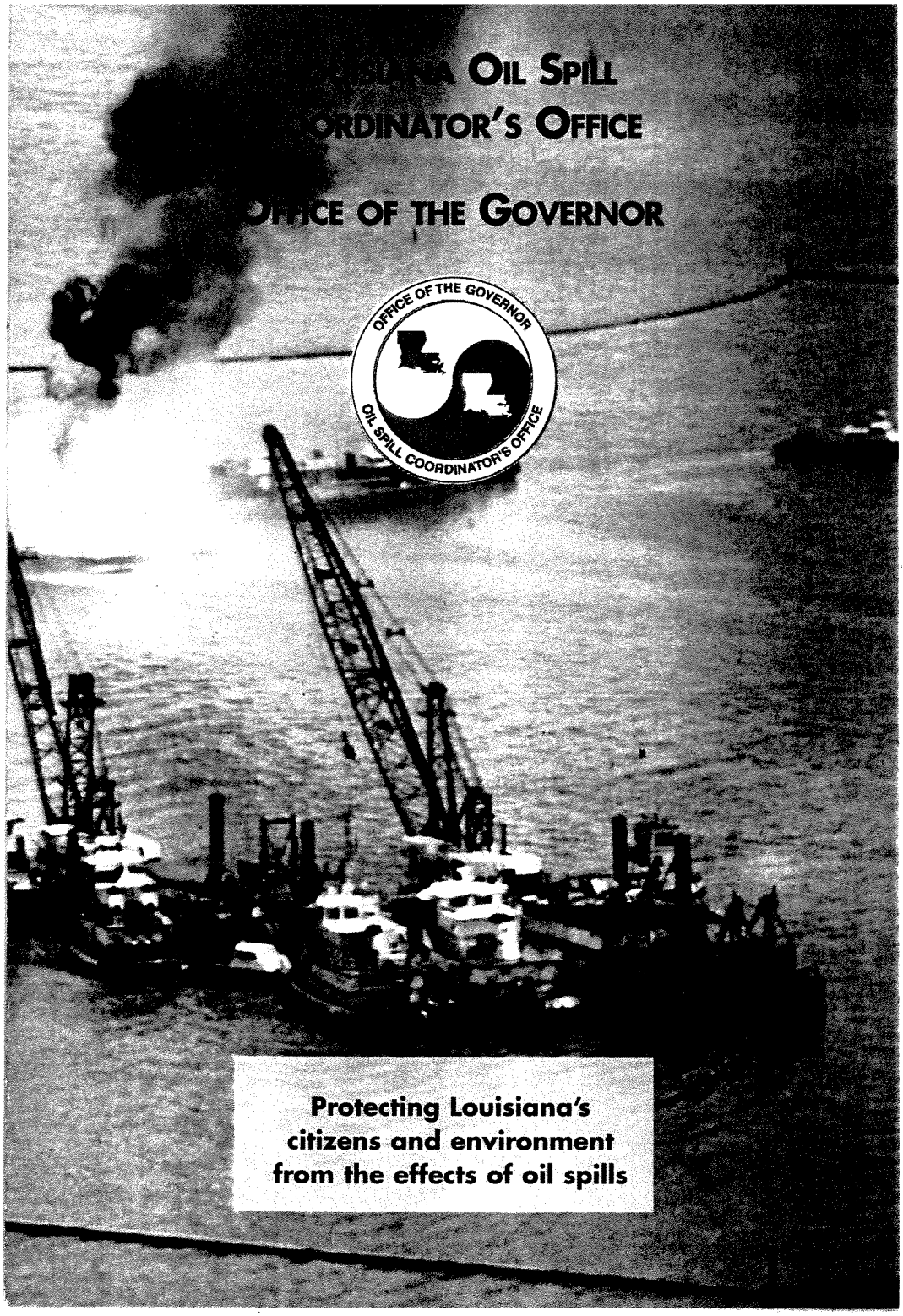

LOUISIANA OIL SPILL COORDINATOR'S OFFICE

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Protecting Louisiana's citizens and environment from the effects of oil spills

About LOSCO

The state legislature created the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office (LOSCO) in 1991. LOSCO was made part of the Governor's Office so that it could serve as the single point of contact for all programs related to oil spills in Louisiana. Our mission is to respond to oil spill events, restore natural resources, protect economic infrastructure, and safeguard public health. LOSCO is funded by a two-cent per barrel tax on all oil transported to or from vessels at Louisiana marine terminals.

Insuring Effective Cleanups. LOSCO coordinates the state's oil spill response efforts, making sure that cleanups are properly completed.

Restoring Public Resources. If a spill significantly injures natural resources, LOSCO and its trustee partners require the responsible party to compensate the public for losses to land, wildlife, or services.

Focused on Prevention. LOSCO and its government partners clean up high risk sites before spills occur. We inform citizens about oil spill risks, and we sponsor research that improves prevention techniques.

A National Innovator. LOSCO is one of the few state oil spill response offices in the nation that tests research in real spill situations. LOSCO is the first such office in the U.S. that is designing statewide regional restoration plans to expedite the recovery of natural resources after oil spills.

A Government Partner. LOSCO has built strong working relationships with government agencies, community groups, and representatives of the oil and gas industry.

Response: The Cornerstone of LOSCO's Mission

LOSCO insures that oil spills are cleaned up quickly and thoroughly. As the state's lead office for oil spill response, LOSCO coordinates cleanups and serves as a point of contact for information about response procedures. A LOSCO staff member is on call 24 hours a day, ready to begin cleanup activities should the need arise. To insure that all parties involved have the information they need to do their jobs well, LOSCO has also created the following response tools:

State Contingency Plan. Many government agencies are involved in oil spill cleanups. To help these agencies provide a swift, coordinated response, LOSCO and its government partners created the State Contingency Plan. The plan defines an overall chain of command for oil spill cleanups, including a description of each agency's specific responsibilities.

Environmental Baseline Inventory. Cleanup plans can't be developed without good data. To meet this need, LOSCO created the Environmental Baseline Inventory. This database includes the locations of sensitive environments, transportation systems, ocean currents, past spill sites, and other parameters. We compiled the information on a CD entitled the "Louisiana GIS CD: A Digital Map of the State." LOSCO also monitors pre-spill sediment conditions at key locations throughout Louisiana.

Professional Training. LOSCO developed a two-day training program for contractors, government officials, regulators and others involved in oil spill response management. The course explains regulations, the latest response techniques, and research results. Trainers use case studies and spill simulations to create an interactive learning environment. The training course is offered free each month in different cities throughout the state.

Preventing Spills

LOSCO protects public resources by preventing spills. As part of this effort, we have begun to clean up the most likely sources of future oil spills: abandoned barges, pits, wells, and tank batteries.

Abandoned Barge Program. LOSCO has located hundreds of abandoned barges in Louisiana. We are working with the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to remove the most spill prone vessels from state waterways. The Federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund pays for the cleanups, which saves the state hundreds of thousands of dollars. What's more, our program has spurred many abandoned barge owners to remove their vessels without government help.

Abandoned Facilities Program. LOSCO located thousands of abandoned pits, wells, and tank batteries in Louisiana. We then developed a team of government partners and began to clean up these sites. Our allies in this ongoing program include: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

If you see spilled oil, the law requires that you make two (toll-free) calls.

- Call the 24-hour Louisiana Emergency Hazardous Materials Hotline: **877/925-6595**.
- Call the National Response Center: **800/424-8802**.

Compensating the Public

LOSCO's job is not done when the basic spill cleanup is complete. Oil spills can injure public resources such as land, vegetation, and wildlife. In such cases, LOSCO seeks compensation from the responsible party.

NRDA. LOSCO works directly with the responsible party to determine the form compensation will take. To guide these negotiations, LOSCO uses a process called a Natural Resources Damage Assessment or NRDA. Depending on the situation, the NRDA process might require the responsible party to do such things as plant a new salt marsh or improve bird nesting grounds.

Speeding the Process. LOSCO is working with other government agencies and local communities to create ready-made restoration plans for every region in Louisiana. If a spill occurs, we will have a series of prepared plans to choose from when we evaluate restoration options. This will allow us to lower costs, restore lost resources more quickly, and apply restoration funds where they will bring the most benefit.

Improving the Science

Each year, LOSCO provides funds for research projects at state universities. These projects examine innovative response techniques, create new teaching tools, and develop more comprehensive data about spill risks.

Cutting Edge Research. LOSCO's research agenda is flexible, driven by requests from oil spill professionals who need practical solutions to problems they have experienced in the field. Our researchers thus have the opportunity to blaze new trails and see their work put into practice.

Effective Partnerships. LOSCO works with industry and other government contacts to insure that all funded research will help operators in the field. All research projects are selected using a competitive process.

Testing New Science. When oil spills occur in Louisiana, LOSCO invites our researchers to apply experimental cleanup methods. These "spill of opportunity" projects are by nature limited in scope, but their conclusions provide invaluable proving grounds for research.

• • •

Facts about oil spills in Louisiana:

- The National Response Center receives approximately 4,000 spill alerts in Louisiana each year. This represents 18% of the nation's total and 47% of the Gulf of Mexico's total.
- More than half of these spills are under six barrels. A barrel is equivalent to 42 gallons.

Spreading the Word

Since LOSCO's work affects the quality of public land and water, we provide forums for speaking with citizens about oil spill risks and response.

School Curriculum. The Oil Spill Awareness Through Geoscience Education curriculum provides a complete course about earth science and the oil and gas industry. The curriculum is geared for middle and senior high school students and is approved by the Louisiana Science Teachers' Association. Copies of the curriculum have been distributed to all Louisiana public schools.

Explaining the Risk. LOSCO sponsors a training course that explains how to use the "Louisiana GIS CD: A Digital Map of the State." This CD has data sets that describe the land, wildlife, and infrastructure that could be threatened by oil spills.

Targeting Small Spills. One of LOSCO's researchers found that Louisiana's coastal fishing fleet creates approximately 250,000 gallons of waste oil each year. Fortunately, at least 50% of the fishermen recycled their used oil. In order to increase this percentage, LOSCO sponsored the creation of a poster entitled, "Small Spills Add Up: Recycle Used Engine Oil and Protect Your Fisheries Resources." The poster has been distributed to public schools throughout Louisiana.

Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Office of the Governor
150 Third Street, Suite 405
Baton Rouge, LA 70801
tel: 225/219-5800
fax: 225/219-5802

Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office
Office of the Governor
150 Third Street, Suite 405
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

A total of 3,000 copies of this public document were published at a cost of $1,806.61 by the Oil Spill Coordinator's Office/Office of the Governor. Material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to La.R.S.43:31.