

## Interview Summary Form

## Interview Details

Interviewee Name:	<u>CAPT Ed Stanton</u>	Date:	<u>8/24/10</u>	Time:	<u>3:00pm</u>
Interviewee Title:	<u>New Orleans COTP</u>	Interviewee Job Location:	<u>New Orleans, LA</u>		
Interviewer Name(s):	<u>Team</u>	Interview Location:	<u>New Orleans, LA</u>		

## Interview Questions

Initial Question 1: What was your job/role and how did it evolve (if at all) during the DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident?

Focus Area: AC Representation/ UAC/ICP	<b>Question 1:</b> Could you discuss your official role this incident? What was the process of growing the organization to a UAC? Based on your professional experience, were there any recommendations you made to enhance the response operation?
Focus Area: Integration of Regional/Area Contingency Plans	<b>Question 2:</b> We understand you were involved in the development of the One Gulf Plan. Can you briefly describe it to us? What role did it play in this response? How did the other plans interrelate?
Focus Area: Common Operating Picture	<b>Question 3:</b> What organization produced the COP used by you and most responders? How effective was it?
Focus Area: Planning and Plan Execution	<b>Question 4:</b> There has been a lot of discussion about quantification of the spill rate and its impact on the response. From your standpoint, do you think uncertainty had an impact on the actual response? Do you think the accuracy had an impact in terms of public perception?
Focus Area: Political Demands	<b>Question 5:</b> Were you influenced by politics in the execution of the response? Did it have a positive or negative impact on the response operations? What were those impacts?
Focus Area: Political Demands	<b>Question 6:</b> Do you believe pressure from senior officials, elected officials or BP impeded the decision making process? If so, could you give us an example?
Focus Area: Use of Dispersants/In- Situ Burning	<b>Question 7:</b> What was your role in deciding on the use of Dispersants or In-Situ Burning? Did you follow protocols from the plans and procedures or did you have to deviate to address real-world issues?
Final Question 1:	What were the top 2 "best practice(s)" during this incident, from your perspective?
Final Question 2:	What do you assess to be the top 2 "areas needing improvement" (or downright "failures") from your perspective, and do you have any related recommendations regarding these areas?
Final Question 3:	Is there anything else we should know?
Final Question 4:	Who else should we interview?

## Notes

### **Initial Question: What was your job/role and how did it evolve (if at all) during the DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident?**

- CAPT Stanton was on leave and received a call from the Chief of Staff telling him about the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) accident.
- He reported in to the Unified Area Command about 1730 on 24 April and reported to RADM Mary Landry. She told CAPT Stanton that she was going to be the FOSC and Area Commander (though she did not say who gave her that authority). He asked RADM Landry about what she wanted him to do, and she sent him to the Incident Command Post (ICP) in Houma to help CAPT Scott Paradis.
- CAPT Stanton arrived in Houma around 2130, and the following morning he reported to the ICP and started working, and he stayed there until about 28 May. Then he relieved CAPT Paradis as the Incident Commander (IC). Then both he and CAPT Paradis became FOSCRs.

### **Question 1: Could you discuss your official role this incident? What was the process of growing the organization to a UAC? Based on your professional experience, were there any recommendations you made to enhance the response operation?**

- Over the course of time, BP, state officials, U.S. Department of Interior (DOI), Minerals Management Service (MMS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) became part of the Unified Command at the ICP.
- Early on, the ICS functions seemed to be running fairly smoothly, with about 450 people there.
- The brain trust of oil spills was there: Ben Benson (Deputy IC for BP), Frank Paskovich (former New Orleans Sector Commander; Ed Levine served as NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC); Steve Spencer, the EPA Regional Environmental Officer for Region VI was there. Charlie Henry, District 8 NOAA SSC, was sent to the UAC.
- Houma was running very well. There was a schedule of meetings, which was being met. One could see a lot of familiar faces and could see you had a lot of skill sets there. All positions were filled, and the people filling them could handle the responsibilities. RADM Landry did well as the Area Commander. Joanna Hanson did a great job.
- The USCG has a history of working well with the state of LA. The USCG has worked on over 70 spills with them.
- Jeff Dauzet (LA DEQ) and Roland Guidry (LOSCO) were both at the ICP. Guidry said that he didn't feel comfortable at UAC, so he came down to Houma.
- The EPA Regional Administrator came to Houma, and he was a big help for resolving issues.
- The Region VI Environmental Officer wanted trustees at the ICP, and the trustees came.
- Nancy Jones of EPA Region 6, was to join the Unified Command.
- Offshore recovery and dispersant operations ran well. The air force pilots were helpful.
- It took a long time for the Unified Area Command to get organized. CAPT Stanton asked Admiral Landry to not give tactical direction from the UAC.
- There were USCG representatives in Houston, including Strike Team personnel.
- Recovery vessels were being run by the Operations Section Chief and a Branch Chief at the ICP in Houma. The source control surface vessels were being run out of Houston. Everything activity regarding the source was being run out of Houston. The ICP did have a live feed showing the vessels in the Gulf. Until you have source control, you've got nothing.
- BP brought in some very competent people. Some of them came to Houma. Some of them were a little slow at handling certain issues, but CAPT Stanton said that that is part of the logistics challenges. The teams in Houston were focused on source control. Their objectives were irrelevant to the objectives in Houma. That's their corporate structure. BP was not slow on the offshore activities.
- Inshore activities focused mostly on boom deployment, and the USCG never seemed to get ahead of that. The governors all wanted boom immediately, and the USCG didn't have the resources to fill the demands. The Governor of LA wanted 30 million feet of boom. BP also monopolized the production runs of boom from all the manufacturers. About 65,000 feet of boom can be produced each day, and it takes three days to get the boom from the factory to the staging area. Managing the booms was a constant source of irritation. The number of feet of boom is NOT an accurate measure of effectiveness for any oil spill response. He was not sure if the number of feet of

boom is a meaningful number for any purpose.

- I'm not sure it was meaningful to hear the number of feet deployed. Then we had the first weather front, and it blew the boom away, so it had to be repositioned.
- Originally the USCG boom deployment was to protect sensitive areas, such as Raccoon Island, etc. These islands were in the Environmental Sensitivity Atlas. Area contingency plans don't go into great details on booming strategies, other than listing priorities (wildlife refuges, sensitive habitats, on down to bluffs, beaches, etc.). Then they list what type of recovery technique is preferable. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff helped USCG find where the birds were nesting. Some of those areas listed in the plans and atlas have disappeared since Hurricane Katrina washed them away. The south coast is a very dynamic area so areas identified as land masses one year may be submerged next year.
- The USCG used the One Gulf Plan, which meant USCG had to plan booming strategies for multiple states. No definitive response actions are contained in the One Gulf Plan. Each Sector had an annex in the One Gulf Plan but some annexes were more mature than others. Texas is very mature.
- Governor Barbour of Mississippi indicated he was happy with the booming strategy for his state. Challenges included how to boom the Rigillies (sp?) which is 100 feet deep and has enormous currents, and the Biloxi marsh. All these ad hoc decisions were made using experts and with consultation with the states. Every piece of boom and skimmers east of the Rocky Mountains was ordered by response staff.
- The shoreline protection piece was a desperate situation, while the offshore activities were running more smoothly. There was an enormous recovery operation offshore. The Hoss barge had 40,000 bbls/day skimming capability, MSRC had 10,500 bbls/day skimming capability. Total offshore skimming capability was around 85,000 bbls/day.
- The National Response System worked in the end. But it could always work better.
- It's hard to answer whether the relationship between Houma and UAC could be better. CAPT Stanton wanted written delegation of FOSC authorities from RADM Landry.
- The UAC put out an Area Operating Guide as opposed to an Incident Action Plan (IAP). The USCG was restricted in what they could say to the media.
- CAPT Stanton was not allowed to talk to the national media, but he could talk to local media. The Unified Area Commander could speak to the national media. CAPT Stanton thought the order not to talk to the national media came from S-1.
- The UAC had a JIC as did the ICP, but the JIC just never got ahead of the story for the USCG and the government, and there were positive things going on. BP hired the best of the best to deal with the media. The local radio shows were a good outlet for getting the USCG's story out. A lot of people listen to the radio around here.
- The Area Command Post did not seem to care what the USCG had to say, but CAPT Stanton's team would brief the ACP anyway.
- The use of reservists galled CAPT Stanton. His team proposed hiring reservists, because years ago, he had hired Coast Guard reservists, and they became experts on a variety of issues related to oil spills. CAPT Stanton wanted to hire these reservists again for DWH, but he was told to hire staff only through Title 14, which is involuntary recall, not the Active Duty in Support of Operations (ADSO) program, which is voluntary recall. He does not know why that decision was made.
- Give us our requirements. Asked for 213 pollution investigators and FOSC-r, uscg qual system doesn't match up with ics structure or the needs of a large scale event. Needed field observers, safety officers, etc. Database randomly picked reservists. Not a lot of people with 1<sup>st</sup> hand experience
- USCG has put environmental response on the backburner since 2001, because they've got many other duties. One suggestion is to bring in EPA OSCs, because they're professional responders and are good at what they do. CAPT Stanton reported that at times, the relationship was somewhat strained. He would put in requests for items, and the requests would be turned down.
- The USCG fails to think big when it comes to ordering resources. For example, he wanted a landing helicopter deck (LHD).
- FAA was somewhat useless for offshore operations. He put in a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) P-3 plane and other resources, and they performed well though. Eventually, the air deconfliction and air traffic control moved to Tindall AFB, which was a good decision.

- CAPT Stanton was allowed to hire 1,100 National Guardsmen, which were paid for by BP. The Guardsmen put in things such as the small beach barriers and sand and rock berms on the small tidal flats and inlets. He placed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in the Command Post, and arranged through them to get permits.
- When asked if marine response should be removed from the USCG mission, he responded it was a valid question. It's not one of the USCG DHS missions, but rather one of the other taskings that USCG does. The EPA is the process owner for OPA90, NCP, and the Clean Water Act.

**Question 2: We understand you were involved in the development of the One Gulf Plan. Can you briefly describe it to us? What role did it play in this response? How did the other plans interrelate?**

- The One Gulf Plan was mostly a Texas effort. It was sort of an umbrella plan to fold the other area contingency plans under it. It didn't have any definitive response actions for CAPT Stanton's zone.
- The One Gulf Plan was a regulatory effort, a one-stop shop for finding information on regulations.
- The plan didn't have an expansive regional approach to a regional spill. (CAPT Stanton read a passage from a binder describing the purpose of the One Gulf Plan.) Not enough attention was paid to the plan.
- The Area Contingency Plan, in his opinion, is not very good and not very detailed. It is hard to get ahead of the curve, and he has only one contingency planner on staff.
- S-1 or S-2 would like to see a campaign plan.
- A site-specific geographic response plan would be very helpful for a major oil spill.
- The big picture worked well. The National Response System worked. The OSRO concept and RP concept worked really well.
- It was the smaller issues that caused problems.
- The USCG used to have SLAR aircraft, but we don't any longer. The Canadians provided us with Dash 8s. Then the Icelanders came in after the Canadians in. Skimmers from the Netherlands and Norway.
- An old war general said in war, plans are useless, but planning is important. It's important to build relationships, but there is very little involvement with local officials at area committee meetings.
- Many of the USCG plans are resource documents. Planning in the USCG is not a great career path.

**Question 3: What organization produced the COP used by you and most responders? How effective was it?**

- The Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA) is one of the tools USCG used for a common operating picture (COP), and it worked for the Coast Guard. It became the COP.
- It is believed that every commander was looking at ERMA. ADM Papp liked the program when he saw it.
- Having a COP was useful for knowing what the Area Commander was thinking and doing.

**Question 4: There has been a lot of discussion about quantification of the spill rate and its impact on the response. From your standpoint, do you think uncertainty had an impact on the actual response? Do you think the accuracy had an impact in terms of public perception?**

- CAPT Stanton indicated that the flow rate did not direct what he was doing.
- CAPT Stanton said he specifically asked about the discharge rate (and the answer was about 1,000 barrels). He said he was told that figure by ADM Landry, and assumed that she received it from BP, since he knew she had been consulting with BP about the oil spill response.
- The long-held USCG policy is if you are not sure about the flow rate, you go with the worst case.
- When CAPT Stanton arrived in Houma, he found that BP had already met the bottom rung of the discharge recovery. CAPT Stanton was asked whether he believed the discharge rate or not. Not important because the company had already responded to 85 times that discharge rate. So that initial estimate did not shape the response because everyone was already responding to a Worst Case Discharge.
- The public and media reaction to the response "killed us." Perception is key to an effective response, and the response effort can go smoothly, but if the public and the media believe it is ineffective then, for all intents and

- purposes, it was ineffective. The USCG never got ahead of that perception problem, and it was damaging.
- Residents here in the Gulf region have an intense distrust of the federal government. Hurricane Katrina taught some bad habits, namely the more you complain, then maybe the federal government will give you a little money. The local media feeds on the public distrust.
- CAPT Stanton said he had been warned not to get into the area of sounding an alarm about the inconsistent messages about the flow rate of the oil. He believed that others warned the Unified Area Command. He views that as a failure of his not to push that issue. He added, however, that it did not matter what the discharge rate was, because USCG and other were already responding to the spill as if it was much larger.

**Question 5: Were you influenced by politics in the execution of the response? Did it have a positive or negative impact on the response operations? What were those impacts?**

- CAPT Stanton said the short answer was yes. He said his main mission was to keep the 11 parish presidents happy.
- Jerry: How did politics influence the mission? CAPT Stanton indicated he did not pay attention to most of the political talk. He said it did not impact the offshore activities, but it did impact the inshore activities.
- For example, he said that when public officials complained that people were out of work, BP brought in vessels of opportunity (VOO) so out-of-work residents could lay boom and help with other activities. When parish presidents said they knew best where to place boom, the USCG listened to them. There were always demands from public officials, especially for boom.
- CAPT Stanton said he believed that there were not enough people in the local emergency operations centers (EOCs), so they helped local officials put in a planning section, operations section, and situational unit in each parish EOC, and that helped improve the response.
- Inshore activities are a huge logistics problem. There is always a demand for more people, more boom, and more skimmers. BP brought in 47,000 employees, and there were huge staging areas in several places. One big challenge is how do you get the people there to help with the response, and how do you keep them there?

**Question 6: Do you believe pressure from senior officials, elected officials or BP impeded the decision making process? If so, could you give us an example?**

- CAPT Stanton said that some Interesting things happened during the response, in particular with the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency and the change of state representation in the UAC.
- Roland Guidry came to CAPT Stanton's Command Post, and Mr. Guidry told him that he had been kicked off the job as the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator and told to get out of the UAC. Mr. Guidry was relieved by the Governor, and Garrett Graves came in his place. CAPT Stanton felt that that issue probably slowed down the response effort somewhat.
- The Governor signed the disaster declaration, and that had a couple of effects. It designated the Governor as the Incident Commander, and designated a Deputy Incident Commander as well, and it left Mr. Guidry in the cold.
- CAPT Stanton stated that the USCG and other agencies have been responding to oil spills in Louisiana for 30 years, and some of them were large. Despite that, the USCG never heard from anyone other than Roland Guidry and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). And these spills put far more oil in certain marshes than the DWH spill has.
- According to CAPT Stanton, the media coverage was crazy, and it affected how the Governor responded.
- There was a Stafford Act line of thinking, but the President did not declare a disaster, and the Governor did not ask for one.
- If NCP is not operating under Stafford Act, then the response effort is very top down. If the Stafford Act had been declared, then USCG and other responders would have been operating under a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) with the local representatives in charge for their locality.
- CAPT Stanton said that one has to fight these oil spills like a war, and throw every resource available at it. That is the reason why he wanted to hire all those reservists and a landing helicopter deck (LHD). It all goes back to the

- perception issue.
- CAPT Stanton felt that responders did not have enough resources for responding to a spill of this size and scale. The United States has enough for smaller spills. There are about 3,000 wells in the Gulf of Mexico. There's not enough high seas boom from this experience. Dispersants were the most effective tool that was used.

**Question 7: What was your role in deciding on the use of Dispersants or In-Situ Burning? Did you follow protocols from the plans and procedures or did you have to deviate to address real-world issues?**

- CAPT Stanton said that in most oil spills, dispersants are usually the first line of response. However, he had nothing to do with subsurface dispersants.
- When CAPT Stanton was asked about the subsurface process, he replied that the subsurface process went through to the National Response Team (NRT). It was supposed to have gone through the Regional Response Team (RRT) first and up to the NRT. But he believed that it may have gone straight to the NRT.
- The state of Louisiana didn't like the dispersants, and the FOSC invoked part of the NCP that discussed preapproval. Many people complained that the dispersants would be toxic and would sink the oil. (CAPT Stanton reads a passage from NCP.)
- The OSC may authorize the use of dispersant, including things listed on the product schedules.
- There were 3 dispersant operations:
  - Subsurface applications
  - Surface applications with aircraft (preapproved and then approved again)
  - Application from vessels at spill source to reduce vapors

**Final Question 1: What were the top 2 “best practice(s)” during this incident, from your perspective?**

- The Strike Teamers and the agency partnerships working together. Having the deputy wildlife officer and regional administrator in your ICP was great.

**Final Question 2: What do you assess to be the top 2 “areas needing improvement” (or downright “failures”) from your perspective, and do you have any related recommendations regarding these areas?**

- The reserve mobilization process was poor.
- The immobility of the JIC and federal response to get ahead of the media caused problems.

**Final Question 3: Is there anything else you want us to know?**

- Question not asked.

**Final Question 4: Who else should we interview?**

- Al Allen.

