

Gulf Strike Team Spearheads FOSCR Training Seminar for Sector Guam

By: LCDR Kenneth Pounds & LT Jereme Altendorf

The week-long Federal On-Scene Coordinator Representative (FOSCR) training seminar attended by select United States Coast Guard (USCG) Sector Guam personnel provided those interested in an FOSCR qualification with an intensive, interactive learning opportunity from instructors who have years of experiences as qualified FOSCRs. Within the USCG, the FOSCR has broad regulatory authorities to oversee environmental emergencies in the coastal zone under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP). USCG FOSCR's share this authority with their inland zone counterparts at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). USCG and EPA FOSCRs respond under the NCP to ensure that the polluter pays for cleanup of oil, hazardous substances and other pollutants and contaminant spills into the environment.

The seminar was sponsored by the USCG District 14's Response Advisory Team (DRAT) in response to an overwhelming demand to have highly trained CG Petty Officers and Officers respond to large-scale environmental emergencies, such as the Deepwater Horizon spill, as well as to the tens of thousands of smaller spills that occur each day in the coastal zones of the United States.



Image 1: FOSCR Seminar instructor Kenneth Pounds talking to the class about responder safety during environmental emergencies.

Recognizing the importance of having several trained and qualified FOSCRs at Sector Guam to protect Guam's (including the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands) environmentally sensitive ecosystem from environmental catastrophes, Sector Guam, D14 DRAT and USCG's National Strike Force (NSF) collaborated to bring the seminar to Guam rather than send personnel off-island. This effort is part of a broader nationwide effort by the USCG to increase and enhance its cadre of FOSCRs to combat all manner of environmentally damaging spills. This includes a vast spectrum of environmental emergency responses, from high-profile oil spills and chemical spill emergencies following natural disasters such as hurricanes/typhoons, floods and/or wildfires to smaller spills requiring far fewer resources to remove and mitigate.

The instructors for this and several other FOSCR Seminars across the country have held positions within the NSF. The NSF's primary mission is to support USCG Sector FOSCRs with resources and training. For the Guam FOSCR Seminar, the NSF sent two highly trained and experienced responders, LCDR Kenneth Pounds from the Gulf Strike Team and LT Jereme Altendorf from the Atlantic Strike Team, to do the bulk of the training with assistance from LT Ryan Dickson, a former Gulf Strike Team member, now working at D14 DRAT. The three instructors covered a variety of FOSCR topics over the course of the week long seminar, including federal environmental laws and regulations, spill response contracting, coordinating with planning and preparedness committees, environmental health and safety, procuring spill response funding. Also included in the seminar were presentations from local spill response contractors and other local response agencies.



Image 2: District 14 DRAT and former GST member, LT Ryan Dickson delivering presentation on temporary storage devices for oil spill response.

On the last day of the training, the instructors set-aside time to contextualize everything that students learned the past week by breaking students up into teams to tackle and review case studies. The case studies walked students through many different real world examples of how to properly execute FOSCR regulatory authorities in the field, during actual spills. Once that group exercise was complete, students spent time reviewing their qualification packages to obtain 'sign-offs' from the instructors. The sign-offs indicated to their home USCG unit that they have been exposed to the material necessary in order to qualify to sit in front of a board of qualified FOSCRs. Before any member can be qualified as an FOSCR, they must prove to their board of peers that they have the minimum requisite knowledge to act appropriately during a spill, and this training seminar is intended to exceed that requirement. The NSF prides itself on providing the FOSCR Seminar to members to ensure they are ready to assume the significant regulatory responsibility for environmental emergency response planning, preparedness, investigation, and enforcement.

Students are encouraged to continue FOSCR learning by logging onto Facebook and request to join the private FOSCR Seminar group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FOSCRSeminar/>

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