

A Strategic Plan for the  
Upper Mississippi River  
Hazardous Spills Coordination Group  
2015 – 2026

*Integrated Planning, Coordination, Preparedness, and Spill Response*



# **UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan Preamble**

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## **Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA)**

The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) is the Governor-established forum for interstate water resource planning and management on the Upper Mississippi River, representing its member states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Through UMRBA, the states work together and diligently with federal partners and stakeholders to advance multi-use management of the river, facilitating and fostering cooperative planning and coordinated management of the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) basin's water and related land resources. In acknowledging the complex nature of the river system and array of human uses, UMRBA has always held that river management requires thoughtful and inclusive dialogue among the diverse suite of stakeholder representatives throughout the region.

Since 1989, the UMRBA has provided staff support for the UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group (Spills Group), which includes representatives of state and federal agencies who play a role in contingency planning and spill response on the river. The UMR Spills Group provides a forum for interagency coordination, serves as a voice for the region's spill responders on various issues, and helps in the preparation and execution of training activities.

The UMR Spills Group maintains the Upper Mississippi River Spill Response Plan and Resource Manual ([UMR Spill Plan](#)), which has been adopted by its state and federal agency members. The UMR Spill Plan is designed to coordinate state and federal agency response to spills on the interstate UMR. It establishes several UMR-specific protocols and policies, including notifications. The plan complements broader regional and national contingency plans by addressing issues and concerns related specifically to spill response on the Upper Mississippi River. The plan includes a resource manual that contains information about potential spill sources, vulnerable resources, and response assets in the river corridor.

UMRBA also engages in an extensive contingency planning and mapping effort funded largely by the USEPA Region 5. Products include geographic information system-based sensitivity atlases for the Region 5 states (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) and contingency plans for several metropolitan areas and National Wildlife Refuges in the region. Spill Response Plans developed for the UMR have been created for many of the pools; a pool is a part of the river from one lock and dam to the next. UMR Spills Group members have been important contributors to the development of these plans.

## **2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan Purpose**

This strategic plan states the cooperative priorities of the UMR Spills Group for the period 2021-2026. The plan contains elements in a range from general themes to specific work tasks. These elements outline the Spills Group's priorities and are intended to guide members' collaborative work in preparation, planning, and response to spills impacting the Upper Mississippi River. It is intended that this strategic plan will be revisited periodically to adjust priorities as member organizations change their internal focus, staff capacity, or other factors that affect Spills Group work.

## **Geographic Scope**

The UMR Spills Group focuses primarily on the Upper Mississippi River from the confluence of the Ohio River upstream to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Notifications are also made for spill events on tributaries if the responding agency determines that the release may affect the main stem of the river. Federal

jurisdictions within this geographic area include the U.S. Coast Guard 8<sup>th</sup> District, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Regions 5 and 7, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 3, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division. Tribal jurisdictions within the area include the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and Prairie Island Indian Community. State jurisdictions include the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Additionally, the area comprises sixty counties from the head of navigation in Minnesota to the confluence with the Ohio River.

### **UMR Spill Response Plan and Resource Manual (UMR Spill Plan):**

The UMR Spill Plan is a document designed to coordinate state and federal agency response to spills on the interstate UMR. It establishes several UMR-specific protocols and policies, including a notification protocol. It also includes appendices listing response resources, sensitive human and natural resources, and potential spill sources along the river corridor.

### **UMR Pool Spill Response Plans**

Due to long-standing concerns about spills of oil and hazardous substances onto National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) lands along the UMR, the USEPA partnered with USFWS to help enhance spill contingency planning and preparedness in response to spills. The goal of this effort is to create a series of locally-applicable response and planning tools to enhance decision making and improve the quality of spill response in these relatively remote areas. The plans are designed to protect resources, improve communication, and enhance knowledge for river pools. A pool is a reach of the UMR between locks and dams, with the downstream dam giving the pool its name, e.g., Pool 13 runs between Lock and Dam 12 and Lock and Dam 13.

### **Regional Response Teams (RRT)**

The Regional Response Team is a key component of the U.S. federal government's commitment to ensure effective preparedness and response to oil and chemical incidents affecting human health and safety, as well as the environment. As described in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP, 40 CFR part 300), the RRTs are responsible for planning and coordination of regional preparedness, as well as planning and coordination of response actions in support of the Federal On-Scene Coordinator. Among the UMR states, RRT5 covers Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and RRT7 covers Iowa and Missouri.

## **UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan Mission Statement**

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To enhance capabilities of all stakeholders tasked with managing incidents impacting the Upper Mississippi River and immediate tributaries through support of integrated planning, coordination, preparedness, and spill response

# UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group

## 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan

### Goal 1

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#### Goal Statement

Develop guidance for stakeholders tasked with managing incidents impacting the UMR to help ensure safe and effective response operations

#### Strategic Initiative

Support members by maintaining current and relevant planning and reference materials

#### Objectives

##### 1.A: Update the UMR Spill Response Plan & Resource Manual

Priority: High

Timeline: Start: November 2021  
Completion: April 2022

Responsibility: UMRBA

##### Critical Activities:

- Establish a schedule for plan updates
- Establish a schedule for resource manual updates
- Conduct plan/manual review, report findings, and gather input from Spills Group
  - Review response, clean-up, and inter-jurisdictional policies
  - Make determination on inclusion of Missouri River and major tributaries
- Identify sources and additional mechanisms (i.e., web map application [WMA], field data collection, on-line survey) to gather data
- Coordinate with groups engaged in spill preparedness (i.e., subareas, community awareness and emergency response [CAER] groups, regional response teams [RRT])
- Provide progress updates to UMR Spills Group

##### Performance Indicators:

- UMRBA assigns update tasks to members
- All members confirm Plan policies are consistent with internal policies or suggest changes to group for consideration
- All members provide UMRBA with updated Resource Manual content for their agency/AOR according to schedule
- Final plan routed to and signed by member agencies

## 1.B: Maintain existing UMR Pool Spill Response Plans

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Start: December 2021  
Completion: March 2022 (pending fair weather and river conditions)

Responsibility: UMRBA

### Critical Activities:

- Identify priority pools based on age and hydraulic changes
- Update Incident Action Plan (IAP) contact list
- Identify existing sites for field recon by state or federal partners during normal work
- Identify possible new sites to add or obsolete sites to delete based on changed hydrology
- Hold planning meeting to develop draft response strategy sites
- Coordinate field work to verify all valid sites in pool
- Submit updated plan to Regional Response Teams for USEPA Regions 5 and 7 (RRT5 and RRT7)

### Performance Indicators:

- Convene resource trustees and responders for target pool identification
- Convene resource trustees, responders, and oil spill removal organizations (OSROs) for planning meeting
- Schedule and coordinate field day for site verification
- Compile draft response strategies for Spills Group review
- Submit updated plan to RRT5 and RRT7

## 1.C: Identify and prioritize development of new UMR Pool Spill Response Plans

Priority: Low

Timeline: Start: December 2022  
Completion: November 2023  
[Note: Pools 24-26 will start November 2021 pending easing of pandemic restrictions]

Responsibility: UMRBA

### Critical Activities:

- Identify priority pools
- Hold planning meeting to develop IAP and draft response strategy sites
- Coordinate field work to verify draft sites
- Stakeholder review of IAP and response strategies

- Submit new plan to RRT5 and RRT7

Performance Indicators:

- Convene resource trustees and responders for target pool identification
- Convene resource trustees, responders, and OSROs for planning meeting
- Schedule and coordinate field day for site verification
- Compile draft response strategies and IAP for Spills Group review
- Submit final plan to RRT5 and RRT7

# UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group

## 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan

### Goal 2

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#### Goal Statement

Support coordination and communication activities among stakeholders tasked with managing incidents impacting the UMR

#### Strategic Initiatives

Support members in meeting training and exercise requirements

Develop a standardized incident after-action report

Review a spill notification system and identify enhancements; include private industry and contractors

Review MOUs/MOAs in a place among states, including Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMAC) and spill response resource packages available from states

Identify opportunities to expand collaboration

#### Objectives

##### 2.A: Formalize and improve notification during real incidents and notification drills

Priority: High

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: April 2022

Responsibility: All

##### Critical Activities:

- Develop complete notification list for Spills Group
- Set timeline for members to update internal notification lists
- Develop schedule for regular contact information updates to push to members
- UMRBA cooperates with USCG and USEPA to conduct periodic notification drills

##### Performance Indicators:

- Members provide key contacts to UMRBA
- UMRBA compiles contact updates according to schedule for distribution to Spills Group
- Members push complete updated contact list to internal dispatch
- Group determines frequency and types of notification drills to hold

##### 2.B: Review existing agreements and propose new mutual aid agreements

Priority: High

Timeline: Start Date: December 2021  
Completion Date: April 2022

Responsibility: States

Critical Activities:

- Summarize existing MOAs and MOUs among members
- Determine other agreements that could support response work among members
- Partner agencies craft agreement language
- Partner agencies route draft agreement for internal approval

Performance Indicators:

- Summary of existing agreements is shared within group
- Group completes list of any new agreements that would support mutual work
- Appropriate agencies sign off or approve new agreements
- Final new agreements are added to UMR Spill Plan

**2.C: Organize exercises and training for members and associated groups, including industry.**

Priority: Low for first year

Timeline: Start Date: April 2022  
Completion Date: December 2022

Responsibility: All

Critical Activities:

- Group advertises exercises or training for members or other affiliated groups
- Determine frequency of training or exercise events group will support
- UMRBA supports development of events held by members

Performance Indicators:

- UMRBA posts advertisement for an event on its website and distributes to members
- UMRBA and members provide in-kind support for development of events
- Group completes an exercise or training event on schedule

**2.D: Develop a standardized incident after-action report (AAR)**

Priority: High

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: April 2022

Responsibility: UMRBA, states



Critical Activities:

- Identify key components of an AAR that would benefit members by considering common needs and incident trends
- Develop standard form that members can use to share incident information and lessons learned, including lost recreational use and resource impacts.

Performance Indicators:

- Convene to discuss information priorities and situational needs
- UMRBA develops draft AAR form based on a Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program HSEEP or state templates already in use
- Group approves AAR template for optional use within Spills Group

# UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan

## Goal 3

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### Goal Statement

Garner participation from additional stakeholder groups that would support response efforts during incidents impacting the UMR

### Strategic Initiative

Support outside groups in meeting exercise and training requirements  
Expand membership of the Spills Group

### Objectives

**3.A: Support exercises developed and hosted by industry partners. *(Passive role for Spills Group)***

Priority: Low

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: open

Responsibility: UMRBA, USEPA, USCG

#### Critical Activities:

- Identify industry partners along UMR who could benefit from Spills Group support to meet regulatory exercise requirements
- Coordinate with industry to support exercise development or outreach
- Coordinate state or federal partners with industry to provide exercise oversight or observation

#### Performance Indicators:

- Select industry partner for exercise support
- Determine supporting Spills Group members based on jurisdictions
- UMRBA support industry in scenario and document development

**3.B: Reach out to other agencies or entities with an interest in UMR response.**

Priority: Low

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: annually

Responsibility: UMRBA

#### Critical Activities:

- Identify federal, tribal, state, or local agencies with interest in river response for releases of non-Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA)-related materials
- Identify industry sectors or public utilities with a vested interest in the UMR
- Reach out to agencies to invite discussions about how they could benefit from participating with the Spills Group
- Coordinate with members to identify potential partnerships or planning work to address broader scope of spills

Performance Indicators:

- Convene discussion to identify related response activities and agencies or organizations
- Include new partners in relevant Spills Group activities

**3.C: Consider expanding geographic scope of group to include tributaries or counties further from the UMR.**

Priority: None

*[Note: On its August 17, 2021 call, the UMR Spills Group decided to postpone a recommendation to expand to situational notification based on best judgment. Regional planning work on worst-case discharges and time of travel analyses may reprioritize this objective in the future.]*

Timeline: Start Date:  
Completion Date:

Responsibility: UMRBA, others

Critical Activities:

- Reach out to county emergency managers along tributaries that impact the UMR to gauge interest in taking part in the group
- Identify potential industry participants in the expanded geography
- Consider implications of expansion to protocols and activities

Performance Indicators:

- Convene discussion to identify agencies, partners, and impacts of a broader geographic scope

# UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group

## 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan

### Goal 4

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#### Goal Statement

Ensure sufficient resources to maintain services and attain the goals of this plan

#### Strategic Initiative

Seek alternative funding sources for related work that supports response activities on the UMR

#### Objectives

4.A: Identify potential new funding sources for achieving goals within the group and with other entities.

Priority: Low

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: annually

Responsibility: All

#### Critical Activities:

- Identify smaller-scope programs or projects (e.g., river stages at which a boat access is useable) with response-supporting targets that could be replicated throughout the UMR.
- Apply for funding to carry out projects on wider scale.
- Convene members to coordinate project work and determine schedules.

#### Performance Indicators:

- Provide summary of related or parallel projects the group could consider pursuing.
- Secure grant or contract funding to perform project tasks.
- Update plans, data repositories, or other relevant entities with resulting information.

# UMR Hazardous Spills Coordination Group

## 2021 – 2026 Strategic Plan

### Goal 5

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#### Goal Statement

Identify technology and resources to advance group interests in the future

#### Strategic Initiative

Keep technologies and policies used by the Spills Group current

#### Objectives

5.A: Support the development of a UMR-centric online data viewer.

Priority: High

Timeline: Start Date: November 2021  
Completion Date: open-ended (viewer is currently in development by USEPA Region 7; Spills Group support will be clarified as viewer becomes available)

Responsibility: UMRBA

#### Critical Activities:

- Collaborate with agencies and industry involved in planning the development of an online data and mapping resource.
- Identify components of the data viewer that can be updated or maintained by members.
- Develop a schedule of data updates to ensure currency of data in the viewer.
- Promote use of the viewer among members

#### Performance Indicators:

- Participate in conference calls or meetings to assist in data viewer development.
- Assign update tasks to appropriate agencies or partners according to the agreed-upon schedule.

5.B: Ensure that the Spills Group is consistent with state and federal members' goals and targets for adapting to climate change.

Priority: Medium

Timeline: Start Date: April 2022  
Completion Date: December 2022 (UMRBA to present topic at spring meeting and determine action items then)

Responsibility: UMRBA, states, federal partners

#### Critical Activities:

- Identify impacts of changing climate on response on the Mississippi River

- Present science of changing climate and weather patterns and their effects on the UMR
- Clarify member agency positions on adapting to climate change

Performance Indicators:

- Convene to discuss impacts observed through science or field experience

## **Other Ongoing Activities**

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The Spills Group identified the following topics to continue to implement, but not address in this Strategic Plan:

- Connecting to sub-areas, RRTs, and CAER groups
- Elevate awareness of importance of UMR to enhance state response programs' capacity
- Evaluate interest and practicality of expanding the group's geographic scope