

EPPR Strategic Plan

(approved by SAOs in Fairbanks, March 16, 2016)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Arctic Council was established in 1996 as a high-level forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants. The Ottawa Declaration lists the following countries as Members of the Arctic Council: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States. In addition, six organizations representing Arctic Indigenous peoples have status as Permanent Participants. The category of Permanent Participant was created to provide for active participation and full consultation with the Arctic Indigenous peoples within the Council. They include: the Aleut International Association, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council. Observer status in the Arctic Council is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work. Arctic Council Observers primarily contribute through their engagement in the Council at the level of Working Groups. The Council focuses its work on matters related to sustainable development, the environment, and scientific cooperation through six standing Working Groups with input from expert groups and ad-hoc task forces.

1.2 Context

Emergency Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (EPPR) Working Group, one of the six standing working groups, is mandated to contribute to the prevention, preparedness and response to environmental and other emergencies, accidents, and Search and Rescue (SAR). While not an operational response organization, members of the Working Group conduct projects to address gaps, prepare strategies, share information, collect data, and collaborate with relevant partners on capabilities and research needs that exist in the Arctic. Projects and activities include development of guidance and risk assessment methodologies, coordination of response exercises and training, and exchange of information on best practices with regards to the prevention, preparedness and response to accidents and threats from unintentional releases of pollutants and radionuclides, and to consequences of natural disasters.

EPPR is assigned the responsibility for maintaining the Operational Guidelines that implement the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA) to which all Arctic Council countries are signatories. EPPR also supports the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) in the Arctic by addressing relevant lessons learned from SAR exercises and real incidents.

The EPPR work plan is refined biennially through Ministerial Declarations and is further shaped by guidance from Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs).

The Arctic is an environmentally sensitive area with an extreme climate characterized by low temperatures, winter-time darkness, snow, ice and permafrost. These harsh conditions and the sparse and limited amount of infrastructure in much of the Arctic increase risks and impacts and hinder response activities. Actions for prevention, preparedness and response must be carefully pre-planned and adapted to the conditions and remoteness of the Arctic to maximize the use of available resources. Accordingly, international co-operation in this area is of major importance.

2. Vision

EPPR strives to be the premier international forum for collaboration on prevention, preparedness and response issues in order to advance risk mitigation and improve response capacity and capabilities in the Arctic.

3. Guiding Principles

The work of EPPR is based on the following guiding principles:

3.1 The cooperation between the participating countries

Members of the Working Group exchange information on best practices and conduct projects to include development of guidance and risk assessment methodologies, response exercises, and training. This work improves cooperation, coordination, and understanding among the countries that is valuable and leveraged, should an emergency in the Arctic occur which requires multilateral response. Through support of the two international agreements (MOSPA and SAR) EPPR serves as a pathway for improved cooperation in international emergency response, a service of value in the vast Arctic region with its extreme climate and limited amount of infrastructure.

3.2 The involvement of Arctic inhabitants

Involvement of indigenous and other Arctic inhabitants in emergency prevention, preparedness and response is of critical importance. Arctic inhabitants, because of their proximity to the activities that pose risks of emergencies in the Arctic, are likely to be most affected by an incident and may provide early intervention before any regional and national resources, if required, can be delivered. In addition, Arctic inhabitants may participate in both preparedness and response actions and contribute their traditional knowledge to the process. EPPR recognizes the importance of involving Arctic inhabitants, and seeks their inclusion in its work.

3.3 Cooperation with External Bodies

EPPR recognizes the importance of communicating with nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, emergency management and other interested communities on Arctic emergency prevention, preparedness and response. EPPR contributes to relevant fora to improve understanding and capacity. EPPR increases its effectiveness and minimizes potential duplication by collaborating with other groups and organizations and building upon existing work when possible. EPPR is closely linked with other Arctic Council Working Groups and works jointly with them, addressing the emergency prevention, preparedness and response aspects of Arctic Council projects and products.

EPPR and industry share a responsibility and have a common interest in safety, search and rescue, and environmental effects. Specific cooperation in EPPR is beneficial to the Arctic Council and advances the EPPR mandate. Such cooperation can include work on projects, and discussion of emerging trends, research and best practices.

EPPR provides information to the public through its web site and through public information channels of the Arctic Council. EPPR has also undertaken projects focused on public information and communication and will continue to address the need to provide accurate and timely information regarding emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

4. The Strategic Plan Framework

Objective 1: Define the risk potential for emergencies due to commercial activities, nuclear/radiological material, and natural disasters that pose a threat in the Arctic

In order to determine the level of preventative and response measures required to reduce risk to an acceptable level, a quantitative determination of the level of risk due to each type of commercial Arctic activity, use of nuclear/radiological material or plausible natural disaster in the Arctic is required. EPPR encourages projects that evaluate the risks and threats imposed by various activities and elements on the Arctic environment including its people. The results of these assessments inform the biennial work plans of EPPR.

Objective 2: Improve prevention measures aimed at reducing accidents which could result in environmental emergencies in the Arctic

Prevention measures are the most effective way to reduce the risk of disasters that threaten human life, the environment and property in the Arctic. EPPR conducts projects and consults with Arctic nation governmental agencies, other Arctic Council Working Groups, industry and other international organizations to determine and recommend best prevention practices.

Objective 3: Improve emergency preparedness and response programs at local, national, regional and international levels, including arrangements for mutual assistance, to ensure they are commensurate with the level of risk that exists.

If preventative measures fail, it is of great importance that sufficient response capacity (and antecedent preparedness measures) is in place on local, national and regional levels to protect Arctic inhabitants and the unique ecosystem. Contingency plans to deal with emergencies should be in place, resources available and the people involved should be adequately trained. EPPR encourages projects and other activities to enhance emergency preparedness and response.

Objective 4: Information sharing

Cooperation between Arctic inhabitants, industries, and governments contribute to the reduction of risk of emergencies that threaten human life, the environment and property in the Arctic. The different national Arctic populations have both knowledge of different types of technology and the ability to function in the challenging Arctic climate. The industries in the Arctic have adjusted to the harsh conditions characterized by very low temperatures, winter-time darkness, snow and permafrost, and have created or adapted technological solutions to these conditions. Research is being done at universities, governmental research centers and other research facilities to expand the Arctic knowledge base. International

cooperation and communication of lessons learned/best practices among these three communities is vital to create programs, maximize resources, and find solutions to common problems. Through this work, EPPR endeavors to create and improve paths of communication between Arctic communities of interest.

Objective 5: Work to effectively implement relevant agreements among the Arctic States and arrangements of the Arctic Council in order to advance emergency prevention, preparedness and response capabilities.

Pursuant to the Arctic Council Iqaluit 2015 Declaration, EPPR will advise SAOs on relevant SAR incidents and events and maintain a repository of lessons learned and best practices of Arctic SAR incidents and events. EPPR facilitates implementation of the SAR agreement by focusing on enhancing cooperation, highlighting best practices, exchanging information, analyzing results of exercises, and sharing lessons learned. EPPR will maintain a repository for lessons learned in Arctic SAR exercises and incidents. EPPR recognizes operational SAR tactics vary and remain the responsibility of member states.

EPPR supports the implementation of the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA) by developing, updating and exercising the Operational Guidelines that delineate the practical aspects of executing the agreement. The Guidelines are formally examined by EPPR biennially to ensure accuracy and effectiveness. Exercises and responses conducted under MOSPA will be reviewed by EPPR to identify lessons learned which will be addressed for continuous improvement.