

Report from the EPPR (Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response) working group to the SAO meeting in Rovaniemi on 12-13 June 2001

1. Introduction

Since the last SAO meeting in Barrow (October 2000) the EPPR working group has had its annual meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, on 20-22 February 2001. Delegations from Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States attended the meeting. Also RAIPON and the Arctic Council Secretariat were represented.

2. Status of the ongoing EPPR projects

2.1 Circumpolar map of resources at risk from oil spills in the Arctic

The aim of the project is to produce a series of GIS-based circumpolar maps showing the areas of highest risk of an oil spill and those areas with sensitive natural resource or subsistence communities. The idea is to highlight a limited number of areas where sensitive Arctic resources overlap with potential oil spill areas, and in this way facilitate the prioritizing of mitigation actions.

The draft version of the circumpolar map was distributed by Norway, the leading country, within the working group for comments in mid April, based on these comments the final version will be prepared. The project will be finalized by the end of May. The map will be distributed on CD as well as on the web. The map will mainly be in internal use until the end of the year to allow EPPR members to get accustomed to it and to reflect over the possible future ways of developing it. EPPR has accepted the kind offer from Akvaplan -niva, Tromsø, Norway (the agency that has implemented the whole work) to host the final product. A link from the Akvaplan-niva website to the EPPR website will be established.

EPPR notes with satisfaction that several of the Arctic Council working groups, e.g. PAME, AMAP and CAFF, have indicated an interest to use the circumpolar map, or parts of the data contained in the map, in their own projects. Also organizations outside the Arctic Council has indicated their interest. EPPR is going to discuss this further with the other working groups, as well as with other interested parties. The future work with the other working groups and the question of possibly continuing the work by expanding the circumpolar map with other relevant data e.g. from the environmental risk analysis, are issues that will be discussed and decided on at the next EPPR meeting.

2.2 Source control management and emergency prevention strategies for high risk activities in the Arctic

The EPPR working group, under the lead of the US and Russia, is conducting a pilot project on source control management. The aim of the pilot project is to develop and test a methodology for reducing the potential for emergencies at facilities. The process includes a facility risk assessment, application of international standards such as ISO 14001, Environmental Management Systems Standards, and recommendations as to what should be done to reduce the risk. The resulting methodology will be applicable to a broad spectrum of Arctic activities. Technical and

organizational proposals for wider application of ISO 14001 standards for risk reduction will be submitted to EPPR for review and discussion.

The initial phase of the pilot project has been conducted at Apatity Vodokanal, which provides drinking water to 80 000 people, by treating surface water with chlorine. This initial phase will be finalized by the end of May and a report will be delivered to EPPR. The future concept of the project is to apply the developed risk assessment methodology at a second facility, with the purpose of refining the methodology.

Representatives of Finland, Sweden and Norway have expressed interest in supporting various aspects of work that would follow the finalization of the risk methodology at the Apatity facility. These projects may include: joint contingency planning, exercises, drills and training, damage assessment, harmonization of legal regimes controlling hazardous substances and liability, and application of the risk assessment methodologies in other areas within the Kola peninsula.

2.3 Development of standardised approach to shoreline cleanup assessment technology (SCAT)

Shoreline cleanup actions may themselves damage the environment, if conducted in the wrong way. As response actions often involves personnel with various levels of training, shoreline cleanup manuals are valuable tools in preparedness.

However, among the Arctic States only the US and Canada have indicated an interest in producing a special Arctic SCAT manual, all the other countries have reported that they are satisfied with their national or other existing manuals. The project will therefore continue on bilateral basis between the US and Canada. EPPR will be requested to endorse the manual for use in the Arctic, once it is complete. Canada and the US expect to have the Arctic SCAT manual ready for the 2002 Ministerial Meeting.

2.4 Airborne radiation monitoring

The NEWNET system of airborne radiation monitoring stations at select US locations collect data including gamma radiation measurements and makes the data available via satellite links and the Internet to interested parties and the public. The NEWNET system was expanded in October 2000 with the addition of a station in Barrow, Alaska, however, due to an ongoing re-evaluation of the entire system, no EPPR project proposal on this subject was delivered at the meeting.

However, this summer, four airborne radiation monitoring stations will be placed around the Bilibino nuclear power plant in Russia. When the stations are in place a bilateral US-Russia emergency exercise will be conducted. The US has invited interested countries to take part in the exercise. Finland and Norway have expressed their interest in participating.

3. New projects

As many of the ongoing EPPR projects are about to come to an end different ideas for new projects have been discussed. Among other things the EPPR Strategic Plan, the AMAP recommendations and the ACAP project proposals are seen as good starting points for new projects.

Russia has informed that they intend to prepare a proposal for a new project named "Development of the System of Interstate Interaction for Prevention of Transboundary Accidents and Elimination

of Consequences of Major Accidents and Disasters with Hazardous Materials Releases in the Arctic Region among Arctic Council Member Countries".

Finland has offered to conduct a survey on past major accidents in the Arctic. This survey can, when completed also give ideas for new projects. Using the discussions at the meeting and the outcomes of the survey as a point of departure the chair and the secretary will prepare a "shopping list" of possible new projects. Depending on the interest among the participants the ideas will then eventually develop into new project proposals to be endorsed at the next EPPR meeting or by the Ministers in 2002, if the proposals are outside the present EPPR mandate.

The working group has also discussed the possible need for broadening the mandate of EPPR, to include also natural disasters like earthquakes, forest fires etc. The survey on past major accidents in the Arctic, that Finland will conduct, will be used as a platform for further discussions concerning the EPPR mandate. If EPPR, at its next meeting, concludes that there is a need for a broader mandate, the issue will be brought to the Ministers for decision.

4. Other EPPR issues

4.1 The Operating Guidelines

The attached (annex 1) Operating Guidelines were adopted by the EPPR meeting.

4.2 EPPR website

The EPPR website is now hosted by the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi, Finland. The new webaddress is <http://eppr.arctic-council.org> and this address will not change even if the hosting organization changes in the future.

4.3 EPPR brochure

A brochure describing EPPR has been published and delivered to interested parties.

4.4 Work plan for 2001-2002

The attached work plan (annex 2) has been adopted by the EPPR.

4.5 EPPR and PAME

Several projects undertaken by PAME have relevance for EPPR, among others: the process to update the matrix of legal instruments, the establishment of a process for reviewing and updating the Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines, and the initiating of a project to develop Arctic Waters Oil Transfer Guidelines. To indicate EPPR's interest in these projects, the EPPR chair provided a letter in advance of the January PAME meeting.

When the updated version of the matrix of legal instruments is circulated by PAME for comments and review among the other working groups and Permanent Participants in mid August, the EPPR chair and secretary will provide EPPR's comments based on EPPR's own legal analysis.

EPPR has reviewed the Emergency chapter of the Offshore Oil and Gas guidelines and informed PAME that no amendments on this chapter are needed.

4.6 Next meeting

The next EPPR meeting will be held in Cordova, Alaska, US in April or May 2002. There is a small possibility that an extra meeting will be held in Helsinki, Finland in November 2001.

5. Actions by SAOs

Based on this report the SAOs are kindly asked to:

- **Approve** the Operating Guidelines for the Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group
- **endorse** the work plan for the Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response Working Group for year 2001-2002
- **welcome** the finalization of the Circumpolar Map on Resources at Risk from Oil Spill, and **take note** of the state of the ongoing project on Source Control Management
- **take note** of the EPPR brochure