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NEW MAGAZINE

Coast Guard personnel aboard Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore prepare the DESMI "Polar Bear" skimmer for an oil recovery exercise in the Arctic Ocean off the coast of Barrow, Alaska. The skimmer was deployed during the third day of the exercise, the first exercise of its kind to be held in the Arctic Ocean

Remote test for **SORS**

US Coast Guard and Department of Defense crews have successfully completed and tested oil spill recovery equipment during an annual exercise off the coast of Barrow, Alaska

The three-day joint oil spill recovery operation was the first of its kind to be held in the Arctic Ocean and so far north. A Coast Guard Cutter named Sycamore served as the exercise platform, operating with crews from the 17th Coast Guard District Response Advisory Team, Coast Guard Pacific Strike Team, Coast Guard Research and Development Center, Navy Supervisor of Salvage, and US Northern Command.

On the first day of the exercise, crewmembers aboard the cutter Sycamore deployed their onboard spilled oil recovery system. The skimming system has four main steps: concentrate the oil; skim the oil; pump oil skimmed from the water's surface; and contain the skimmed oil in a tank. The crew of the Sycamore is required to maintain proficiency in operating the SORS (spilled oil recovery system) equipment through an annual training exercise.

The second day consisted of deploying a Navy SUPSALV NOFI Current Buster 600 boom system. The system was deployed from aboard the Sycamore to evaluate the suitability of a Coast Guard buoy tender as a platform to deploy the boom.

Crews deployed the DESMI "Polar Bear" skimmer on the third day of the exercise. The system is specifically designed to recover oil in pockets of water trapped by ice. The Coast Guard has deployed this system previously on the Great Lakes, but this was the fist time the pocket skimmer was deployed in the ice-covered Arctic Ocean waters off Alaska.

> The Coast Guard chose Barrow due to its extremely remote location and limited infrastructure

The Coast Guard chose Barrow for the exercise due to its extremely remote location and limited infrastructure. Normally oil spill equipment used aboard a Coast Guard buoy tender would be staged while the ship is moored to a pier. With the nearest pier capable of supporting the 225-foot Coast Guard cutter nearly 600 miles away, a tug and barge were dispatched from Prudhoe Bay to Barrow to serve as a staging platform for the oil spill recovery equipment.

The exercise was planned to evaluate the suitability of new equipment for use in Arctic waters and to help the Coast Guard and Department of Defense understand the logistical complexities of operating successfully in remote areas of the Arctic.

"This has been an outstanding opportunity to evaluate our capabilities and see how critical our coordination with federal, state, local and tribal partners will be for success in event of an actual incident," said Lt. Cmdr. Michael

Photo: US Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kelly Parker

Two Kodiak-based MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters have recently relocated to a Barrow Airport, Alaska hangar ready to respond to any maritime search and rescue emergency. The two helicopters with supporting air, ground and communications crews were moved more than 900-miles north from Kodiak to Barrow to reduce response time in the event of an incident in the Chukchi or Beaufort Seas

Photo: U.S. Coast guard photo by Chief Petty Officer Kip Wadlow

Sarnowski, commanding officer of the Sycamore.

Oil spill response operations and exercises highlight the unique capabilities of Coast Guard cutters and their important role in protecting maritime interests in the Arctic region. With the reduction of sea ice, and the increase in human activity in the region, cutters like Sycamore are critical to fulfilling the Coast Guard's legal requirements in the Arctic. FE

> The nearest pier capable of supporting the 225-foot Coast Guard cutter was nearly 600 miles away

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