



The crippled response effort concerning the Exxon-Valdez oil spill

The Exxon-Valdez oil spill affected 24 marginalised coastal communities of Alaska, devastated the pristine wilderness along 2,100 km of coastline and a further 28,000 sq. km of ocean. A lack of pre-existing safety measures were such that “the response effort was crippled from the beginning”. Although there should have been, there was no “response station”, an out of action response boat, not enough boom (to be placed as a barrier between the oil and targeted areas for protection) and a disbanded response team. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation was also similarly unprepared with a lack of staff and equipment. Button (for literature reference see original source document) found that this was not merely a case of neglect or lack of incentive. Instead, it was likely that Exxon had over-promised in their public relations efforts; first wooing local communities to accept a new marine terminal and then placating them in the aftermath of the spill, despite that the scale of the disaster surpassed contingency plans. He concludes that “had all of these response systems been in place, the Exxon-Valdez might have remained a small chapter in the history of oil spills. However, the contingency plans were largely blue smoke and mirrors”.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Power relations](#), [Communication](#)

Disaster Phases: [Preparedness](#), [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Local authorities](#), [Government](#), [Entrepreneurs](#)

Hazards: [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#)

Recommendations:

- [Limit cases of power abuse by protecting whistle-blowers and encouraging the formation of advocacy and/or pressure groups](#)

Source

[Deliverable D7.3 "Report on cultural factors and citizen empowerment" \(page 48\)](#)

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