

Abstract

The Importance of Maintaining a Trained, Exercised and Experience Team of Wildlife Responders and Rehabilitators

Jay Holcomb

International Bird Rescue Research Center, 4369 Cordelia Rd. Fairfield, CA 94534, USA

Oil spill cooperative employees, firemen, EMT's and other emergency responders maintain a state of readiness and sharp skills by immersing themselves in training, drills and actual events. Its is only through consistent exercise and freshening of their abilities that they can stay at the top of their game and provide the best services that they have to offer. Wildlife responders can benefit from discipline and hands on training but oil spills with wildlife are thankfully few and far between to provide consistent experience and training. The best and most efficient oiled wildlife responders are those who work within wildlife rehabilitation NGOs and therefore have the opportunity to stay current in practice and in maintaining hands on skills. These people, volunteers and otherwise, exercise their skills daily in the care of common urban wildlife that require handling and care while dealing with the ongoing politics, emergency cases and the other realities of wildlife rehabilitation. As spills occur, these people are therefore at the ready for response, only having to incorporate the aspects of working with a petroleum product but already knowing how to "respond" adequately, quickly and effectively. IBRRC maintains an oil spill response team of staff and volunteers that fit this bill and have proven to be more successful in an actual oil spill response and in the rehabilitation of oiled birds than people who only show up for spills when they occur. This paper will discuss how IBRRC maintains this response team, what training they are provided and how they function. We will also compare, through example, when we were faced with having to utilize untrained people and when the IBRRC team went into action, ending in completely different results.