

CLAIM SUMMARY / DETERMINATION

Claim Number:	916048-0001
Claimant:	Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services
Type of Claimant:	Municipality
Type of Claim:	Removal Costs
Claim Manager:	[REDACTED]
Amount Requested:	\$593.75

FACTS:

Oil Spill Incident: On December 11, 2015, Guilford County Environmental Health responded on scene to a report of a strong petroleum smell emanating from a storm drain system next to a private residence in Greensboro, NC which was adjacent to a tributary to South Buffalo Creek, a navigable waterway of the US.¹ County responders mobilized with personnel and found a fuel sheen throughout the storm drain. The source of the sheen is suspected to be coming from an abandoned vehicle near the location and cleanup was determined to be necessary. Guilford County assumed responsibility of the incident and contracted with A&D Environmental to handle cleanup and disposal.² Federal On Scene Coordination was provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency Federal On Scene Coordinator (FOSC) [REDACTED] of Region 4.³

The Claim:

This claim for uncompensated removal costs was presented to the National Pollution Funds Center (NPFC) on April 22, 2016, by Guilford County Environmental Health and Human Services for reimbursement of their uncompensated removal costs of A&D Environmental for personnel, equipment and disposal costs in the amount of \$593.75.

APPLICABLE LAW:

"Oil" is defined in relevant part, at 33 USC § 2701(23), to mean "oil of any kind or in any form, including petroleum, fuel oil, sludge, oil refuse, and oil mixed with wastes other than dredged spoil".

The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF), which is administered by the NPFC, is available, pursuant to 33 USC §§ 2712(a)(4) and 2713 and the OSLTF claims adjudication regulations at 33 CFR Part 136, to pay claims for uncompensated removal costs that are determined to be consistent with the National Contingency Plan and uncompensated damages. Removal costs are defined as "the costs of removal that are incurred after a discharge of oil has occurred or, in any case in which there is a substantial threat of a discharge of oil, the costs to prevent, minimize, or mitigate oil pollution from an incident".

Under 33 USC §2713(b)(2) and 33 CFR 136.103(d) no claim against the OSLTF may be approved or certified for payment during the pendency of an action by the claimant in court to recover the same costs that are the subject of the claim. See also, 33 USC §2713(c) and 33 CFR 136.103(c)(2) [claimant election].

33 U.S.C. §2713(d) provides that "If a claim is presented in accordance with this section, including a claim for interim, short-term damages representing less than the full amount of damages to which the claimant ultimately may be entitled, and full and adequate compensation is unavailable, a claim for the uncompensated damages and removal costs may be presented to the Fund."

Under 33 CFR 136.105(a) and 136.105(e)(6), the claimant bears the burden of providing to the NPFC, all evidence, information, and documentation deemed necessary by the Director, NPFC, to support the claim.

¹ See, Guilford County Emergency Incident Report.

² See, Guilford County Emergency Incident Report.

³ See, Guilford County Emergency Incident Report, page 2 EPA signature dated April 21, 2016.

Under 33 CFR 136.105(b) each claim must be in writing, for a sum certain for each category of uncompensated damages or removal costs resulting from an incident. In addition, under 33 CFR 136, the claimant bears the burden to prove the removal actions were reasonable in response to the scope of the oil spill incident, and the NPFC has the authority and responsibility to perform a reasonableness determination. Specifically, under 33 CFR 136.203, "a claimant must establish -

- (a) That the actions taken were necessary to prevent, minimize, or mitigate the effects of the incident;
- (b) That the removal costs were incurred as a result of these actions;
- (c) That the actions taken were determined by the FOSC to be consistent with the National Contingency Plan or were directed by the FOSC."

Under 33 CFR 136.205 "the amount of compensation allowable is the total of uncompensated *reasonable* removal costs of actions taken that were determined by the FOSC to be consistent with the National Contingency Plan or were directed by the FOSC. Except in exceptional circumstances, removal *activities* for which costs are being claimed must have been coordinated with the FOSC." [Emphasis added].

DETERMINATION OF LOSS:

A. Overview:

1. FOSC coordination was established for the incident by the FOSC Mr. [REDACTED] of Region IV for services provided through December 11, 2015,⁴ in accordance with 33 U.S.C. § 1321(d)(2) and the National Contingency Plan.
2. The incident involved the discharge of "oil" as defined in OPA 90, 33 U.S.C. § 2701(23), to navigable waters.
3. In accordance with 33 CFR § 136.105(e)(12), the claimant has certified no suit has been filed in court for the claimed uncompensated removal costs.
4. The claim was submitted timely, within the six year statute of limitations in 33 U.S.C. § 2712(h)(1).
5. The NPFC Claims Manager has thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted with the claim and determined that the removal costs presented were for actions in accordance with the NCP and that the costs for these actions were indeed reasonable and allowable under OPA and 33 CFR § 136.205.

B. Analysis:

NPFC CA reviewed the actual cost invoices and dailies to confirm that the claimant had incurred all costs claimed. The review focused on: (1) whether the actions taken were compensable "removal actions" under OPA and the claims regulations at 33 CFR 136 (e.g., actions to prevent, minimize, mitigate the effects of the incident); (2) whether the costs were incurred as a result of these actions; (3) whether the actions taken were determined by the FOSC, to be consistent with the NCP or directed by the FOSC, and (4) whether the costs were adequately documented and reasonable.

The NPFC confirmed that the actions undertaken were reasonable and necessary and that the services were billed in accordance with the county/contractor's rates for reimbursement. The FOSC has confirmed via signature on the Guilford County Emergency Response Incident Report that the response was reasonable and necessary and properly coordinated with him in accordance with the NCP. On that basis, the Claims Manager hereby determines that the Claimant did in fact incur \$593.75 of uncompensated removal costs and that that amount is payable by the OSLTF as full compensation for the reimbursable removal costs incurred by the Claimant and submitted to the NPFC under claim #916048-0001. The Claimant states that all costs claimed are for uncompensated removal costs incurred by the Claimant for this incident on December 11, 2015. The Claimant represents that all costs paid by the Claimant are compensable removal costs, payable by the OSLTF as presented by the Claimant.

C. Determined Amount:

⁴ See, Guilford County Emergency Incident Report, page 2 EPA signature dated April 21, 2016.

The NPFC hereby determines that the OSLTF will pay \$593.75 as full compensation for the reimbursable removal costs incurred by the Claimant and submitted to the NPFC under claim # 916048-0001. All costs claimed are for charges paid for by the Claimant for removal actions as that term is defined in OPA and, are compensable removal costs, payable by the OSLTF as presented by the Claimant.

AMOUNT: \$593.75

<div><p>[REDACTED]</p></div>
Claim Supervisor: <div><p>[REDACTED]</p></div>
Date of Supervisor's review: 4/27/16
Supervisor Action: <i>Determination Approved</i>