



OKLAHOMA
Environmental
Quality

Oil Spill Tabletop Exercise

Tribal Land Environment Forum 2026

Presented by:

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (OKDEQ)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Situation Manual

This Situation Manual (SitMan) is provided to all exercise participants as the primary reference for their roles. It offers a concise overview of what to expect, such as how the exercise will be conducted, its scope and schedule, and participant responsibilities. Players are encouraged to consult other relevant resources they need to fulfill their roles effectively.

Full Course Agenda

Topic	Presenter	Time
Introduction		1:00 – 1:10 pm (10 min)
EPA Emergency Response	Ari Lippi, US EPA	1:10 – 1:40 pm (30 min)
Case Study	Matt Wormus, OK DEQ	1:40 – 2:10 pm (30 min)
BREAK		2:10 – 2:20 pm (10 min)
Tabletop Exercise	Jeremy Noah, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Lisa Denmark, US EPA Matt Wormus, OK DEQ	2:20 – 4 pm (90 min)
Exercise overview, objectives, and structure		2:20 – 2:30 pm (10 min)
Scenario review		2:30 – 2:45 pm (15 min)
Discussion		2:45 – 3:30 pm (45 min)
Hotwash		3:30 – 3:45 pm (15 min)
Wrap-up & Survey		3:45 – 3:50 pm (5 min)
BREAK		3:50 – 4:00 pm (10 min)
Field Exercise	Tracy Horst and Jeremy Noah, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	4:00 – 5:00 pm (60 min)

Overview

Exercise Name	Oil Spill Tabletop Exercise
Exercise Dates/Times	Tribal Lands and Environment Forum (TLEF) August 17, 2026 1pm – 5pm CDT
Focus Area(s)	Emergency Response; Oil Spill Response
Threat or Hazard	Petroleum oil discharge into the Canadian River, impacting The Chickasaw Nation Reservation and surrounding OK counties
Scenario	Rupture of a valve on a tanker truck during fuel delivery at a gas station results in the release of 1,200 gallons of gasoline, impacting a nearby river and releasing vapor fumes
Sponsors	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Participating Organizations	Participants in the Tribal Lands and Environment Forum (TLEF) Conference, 2026
Point of Contact	Ari Lippi Email: lippi.ari@epa.gov Phone: (202) 566-0182

Exercise Objectives and Capabilities

Table 1 outlines the exercise objectives. These objectives are connected to the planning and operational capabilities of Tribal, state, and federal environmental emergency response professionals.

Table 1. Exercise Objectives and Associated Capabilities

Exercise Objectives	Capability
Develop initial incident response strategies following a tribal dispatch/911 call including identifying, assessing, and addressing hazards posed to the public, responders, and environment, and tribal priorities.	Environmental Response/Health and Safety
Identify notification and communication needs Including being able to share incident information and establish (and maintain) a common operating picture (COP) of the incident among cooperating organizations.	Operational Communication
Understand broader mutual aid/coordination components immediately following an incident including identifying technical support personnel and specialized resources to assist safe/effective operations, as needed.	Operational Coordination
Be able to take on new information during an incident and adjust response plans to ensure protection of people and natural resources.	Functional capacity and flexibility

Structure

The Tabletop Exercise (TTX) portion of the event is a facilitated, discussion-based exercise. During the TTX, participants will be led in an informal group discussion involving a fictional emergency response scenario. Participant discussions will facilitate development of potential solutions to issues via a group-oriented, problem-solving process. All participants will represent their own respective jurisdictions.

After group discussions, participants will engage in a moderated hotwash discussion, in which they will have the opportunity to identify lessons learned, areas for improvement/gaps in knowledge/capability, and best practices.

Exercise Guidelines

- This exercise will proceed in an open, no-fault environment wherein capabilities, plans, systems, and processes will be evaluated. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., based on real response assets and staffing levels) and insights derived from your training and experiences.
- Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.
- Not every issue/problem can be discussed exhaustively. To achieve overall objectives, the facilitators may move the group to subsequent questions once the key points have been covered. Please, trust your facilitator.
- Exercise participant safety takes priority over exercise play. The experience and knowledge gained in an exercise is not worth risking the safety of those involved. The following general requirements apply to the exercise:
 - For immediate emergency services call 911.
 - For an emergency that requires assistance, use the phrase “real-world emergency.”

Participant Roles

There are two primary participant roles for this TTX – players and facilitators. Below is description of each role.

- **Players** respond to the situation presented in the TTX based on their knowledge of current authority, responsibility, capability, plans, and procedures within their organization.
- **Facilitators** run the TTX scenario, pose questions for players to answer, and control and direct the pace of the exercise.

Ground Rules

- Raise your hand when you would like to speak
- Identify your name and organization each time you speak
- Voice opinions openly
- Stay on point and confine discussions to the topic at hand
- Allow everyone an opportunity to speak
- Avoid side conversations
- Define acronyms

Tabletop Exercise

Initial Incident

It is Monday afternoon on August 17, and temperatures hover at 95°F with a heat index near 100°F. Isolated thunderstorms are building to the west. On the border of Oklahoma City and Newcastle along US Route 44, there is a privately owned gas station named “Leaky LLC”¹ within the Chickasaw Nation Reservation that sits atop a hill 0.15 miles from the Canadian River which is classified as a Water of the US (WOTUS).

At 2:35 p.m. a large tank truck carrying over 100 barrels of gasoline arrives for a fuel delivery. As it is pulling into Leaky LLC, it rolls over some road debris which causes a puncture in one of the tanker compartments breaking a valve, and it releases over 1,200 gallons onto the road and into the parking lot. Vapors intensify in the heat, customers abandon vehicles at the pumps and call 911 as a visible sheen spreads toward the Canadian River.

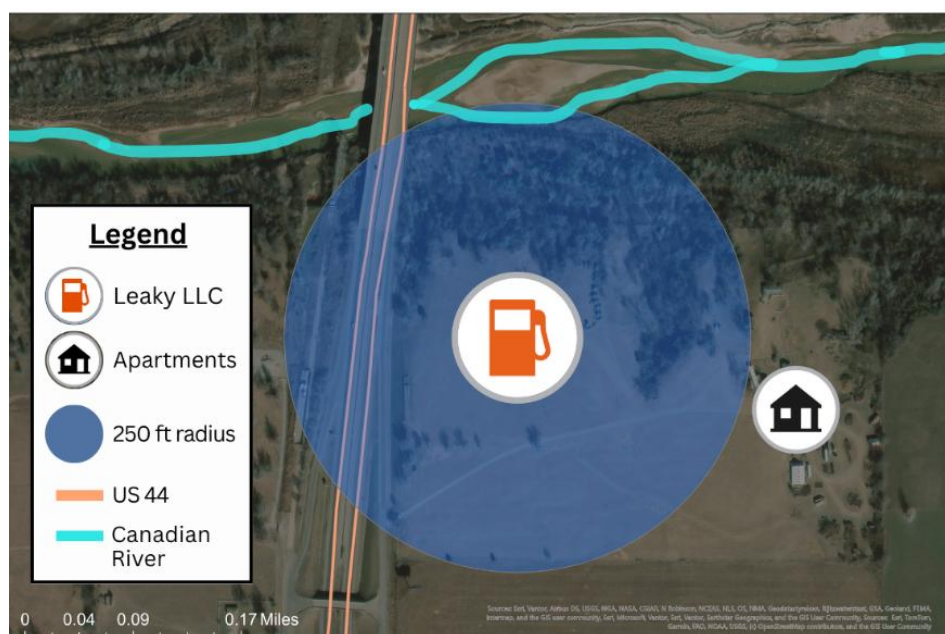
Figure 1. Chickasaw Nation Reservation within the state of Oklahoma²



¹ This is a fictional company. Any resemblance to an actual company is purely coincidental.

² This image has been generated for the purpose of a fictional exercise and is not intended to be used in any real-life decision making or emergency response actions.

Figure 2. Leaky LLC location along Canadian River ³



Initial Response: State and Local

- The 911 operators notify the National Response Center (NRC) and The City of Oklahoma Fire Department.
- The City of Oklahoma Fire Department arrives within 15 minutes. They secure the leak, establish a hot zone, block traffic, and order evacuations of the nearby apartment complex.
- The Fire Department calls in the Oklahoma City HazMat team who arrive in another 30 minutes with their spill trailer. The Team applies vapor-suppressing foam to reduce ignition and to place absorbent booms and sand berms to prevent product from reaching the river.
- The following agencies are notified of the incident: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Oklahoma State EOC, The Oklahoma Department of Homeland Security, and The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (OKDEQ).

³ This image has been generated for the purpose of a fictional exercise and is not intended to be used in any real-life decision making or emergency response actions.

Fig. 3. Example of an oil sheen on water⁴ (left), Fig.4. Example of an oil boom⁵(right)



Initial Response: Federal

- EPA determines that as the Canadian River is classified as WOTUS and within the inland zone, and the spill falls under EPA jurisdiction.
- EPA deploys a federal On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) to the site to assess conditions.
- The EPA OSC and EPA contractors arrive within a few hours. After the fire department determines that there is no risk of explosion and begin air monitoring around the station, an adjacent apartment complex, and along the river.

Figure 5. Example of working with boom on cleanup actions⁶



⁴ Photo courtesy of EPA. https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=8173

⁵ Photo courtesy of EPA. This image has been taken from an archived material.

https://archive.epa.gov/emergencies/content/fss/web/pdf/c_oskins2_04.pdf

⁶ Photo courtesy of EPA. https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=16837

Recovery

- The EPA OSC provides oversight, and contractors continue cleanup actions by applying sorbents to the oil contained by the boom which absorbs the oil for it to be disposed of. Together they've recovered an estimated 800 gallons of oil and contaminated absorbents by nightfall.
- The next day, OKDEQ samples at outfalls and downstream locations. OKDEQ continues to conduct downstream testing along with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.
- Air monitoring returns to background levels, and road closures are scaled back. OKDEQ oversees continued cleanup of the forecourt and storm infrastructure, with follow-up sampling scheduled for the channel after the next rainfall.

Figure 6. Examples of water sampling, OKDEQ⁷



NOTE: This TTX is a fictional exercise that poses a plausible real-life scenario in the state of Oklahoma. Other US states and EPA regions may respond to incidents differently. Contact your state EPA regional office for more information: <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/epa-hotlines#region-specific-customer-service-lines>

Discussion:

You will be separated into groups to discuss how to respond to the incident described in the scenario. Your group discussion will be led by one of the presenters who will review three key categories: Initial incident, Notifications, and Mutual aid/coordination. If your group moves through all three of those themes, you will discuss the bonus categories.

1. Initial Incident

⁷ Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.
<https://oklahoma.gov/deq/divisions/state-environmental-laboratory-services/sample-collection-assistance.html>

1. What hazards are posed to the public and responders? Determine the relative priority of the following incident objectives. Add objectives, as desired.
 - a. Hazard Mitigation
 - b. Risk Communications / Emergency Public Information and Warning
 - c. Public Health/Safety
 - d. Responder Health/Safety
 - e. Local Cultural Awareness
 - f. Environmental Health
 - g. Fire/Explosion Prevention.
2. Among the organizations in your group, what “automatic response actions” and/or protective actions (personnel and deployment of equipment) would be taken once your organization is notified of the incident?
3. What resources would you need to accomplish those response and protective actions?

2. Notifications

4. How would the NRC and Federal agencies be notified?
5. Who are the critical partners and stakeholders, and how will information be shared with them? What are the partner/stakeholder capabilities? What are their assets and limitations?
6. Will you need to draw up mutual aid agreements? When would be an ideal time to do so?

!! New Information !!

While clean up actions are ongoing, a fast-moving, severe flash storm begins moving toward the site. These types of storms are common across Oklahoma and often bring brief, but heavy rainfall. The rapid movement of water threatens to wash more of the spilled oil into the Canadian River, less than 250 feet downhill.

3. Mutual Aid/Coordination

7. How are real-time assessment data (e.g., water/air/soil sampling results) used to develop incident objectives for the next operation period? Will the initial response priorities change?

8. What is your process for coordinating development and sharing of key situational awareness products with response agencies?
9. What specialized resources are needed, if any, to execute your group's chosen strategy?

Bonus Questions!

10. How would the incident response be different if the source of contamination was a chemical?
11. What are the expected environmental impacts (short- and long-term) of such an incident?
12. How would the response actions be different if the gas station was under a fee structure vs if the gas station was tribally owned?
13. How would response strategies be different if it were under different jurisdictions? (i.e. if the spill occurred on state land with downstream impacts to a Tribe, EPA led, state led, etc.)

14. Hotwash

Immediately following the completion of exercise play, the facilitator will moderate a hotwash with players. The player hotwash is a meeting that provides an opportunity to discuss exercise strengths and areas for improvement immediately following the conduct of an exercise.

1. How ready do you feel your organization is for an oil response?
2. How would your organization assess your capabilities to an incident of this type?
3. What Lessons have you learned from this exercise?
4. What are the gaps in knowledge or needed improvements you noticed for your organization?

Evaluation

Please go to the course evaluation form [here](#).

Exercise Evaluation

