

Savannah Hosts International Oil Spill Conference

Story by Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Lynn, MSU Savannah, Ga.

The first week of May brought the International Oil Spill Conference and thousands of response professionals to the city of Savannah, Ga. The week-long conference kicked off with an on-water demonstration of oil spill and other emergency response equipment and technology.

Brad Benggio, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and members of Marine Safety Unit Savannah Response Department, began planning the demonstration months before the conference. Among the items demonstrated were:

- Navy Supervisor of Salvage Current Buster fast water skimming system
- Marine Spill Response Corporation's shallow water skimmer
- Coast Guard's Probe for Oil Pollution Evidence in the Environment deployed from a Georgia Department of Natural Resources helicopter
- Aerial deployment of oil containment boom from a Coast Guard HH-65C helicopter
- Class I fire fighting systems on board Moran and Crescent towing vessels



Moran and Crescent towing vessel operate FiFi Class I fire fighting systems. Each is capable of delivering more than 11,000 gallons of water per minute. USCG Photo

Additionally, NOAA provided a static display of their Navigation Response Team based in Charleston, S.C.

Because there was an extensive need for vessel and personnel resources to facilitate the demonstration, calls for assistance went out to the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Answering that call were Flotillas 10-2, 10-11 and 10-1 based in Savannah, Hilton Head, S.C., and Beaufort, S.C. They provided four vessels and crews, as well as, three additional personnel to assist in enforcing a safety zone, recovering deployed equipment and managing communications between vessels and aircraft.



Members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and MSU Savannah work to deploy oil containment boom delivered into the river by a Coast Guard helicopter. USCG photo

Members of the Auxiliary were also instrumental in the months leading up to the actual demonstration. They participated in multiple tests to support the delivery of oil containment boom through the use of Coast Guard Air Station Savannah HH-65 helicopters.

“The assistance provided by the Coast Guard Auxiliary was tremendous,” said Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Lynn of MSU Savannah. “Without their support, the demonstration would not have gone off as well as it did.”

The International Oil Spill Conference is held in a different location every three years. Its main purpose is to bring scientists, emergency responders and maritime industry representatives together to discuss current and past events relating to the protection of the maritime environment.