NEWS RELEASE
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Audit finds deficiencies in B.C.'s overall management of hazardous spills

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, through the Environmental Emergency Program, oversaw spill response and recovery activities after high-risk incidents but B.C.'s auditor general found that overall the ministry had not effectively managed hazardous spills.

"Whether it's fuel from a motor vehicle incident or a leak from a sunken or grounded boat, thousands of spills are reported every year – and the number has trended higher," Auditor General Michael Pickup said. "When high-risk incidents happen, the ministry responds appropriately. But effective management is more than that."

The performance audit found deficiencies in planning, compliance and enforcement, and cost recovery.

"For example, we found gaps in the Environmental Emergency Program's identification of potential non-compliance with regulations," Pickup said. "The program is designed for there to be consequences when those responsible for spills don't comply with the law."

In addition, the audit found that the ministry:

- didn't have a current provincial-level plan for responding to a major spill;
- didn't consistently notify First Nations communities of high-risk incidents;
- hadn't recovered substantive costs as required; and
- hadn't met the legislated requirement to report to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of the spill response regime.

The ministry has accepted the audit's nine recommendations for improvement.

The Office of the Auditor General will review the ministry's implementation of the recommendations in a future follow up report to the Legislative Assembly and the public.

Related links
[Audit report: Managing Hazardous Spills in B.C.](#)
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[Auditor general's summary (video)](#)

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