

**President of SEA Consulting, Ann Hayward Walker, spoke at the Interspill 2012 Conference on Integrating Risk Communications with Crisis Communications Real-Time**

On March 14<sup>th</sup> during a section of the Interspill 2012 Conference, Communications & Social Media, led by Thomas Liebert from IOPC Fund, Ann Hayward Walker of SEA Consulting gave a lecture on Integrating Real-Time Crisis with Risk Communications.

Accurately informing the media and stakeholders about a significant oil spill which is controversial requires constant, real-time coordination and collaboration within the incident command organization. Stakeholders and the media may believe that the incident has environmental, health, and safety risks associated with the oil, burning and dispersants. Determining how to inform stakeholders about such concerns is the niche of risk communications.

External communications, including crisis communications, are traditionally the purview of public affairs. Risk communications, a form of external communications is a distinct way of communicating with the public in general and, in particular, specific segments of communities affected by an oil spill. Messages about perceived risks may not suffice because stakeholders, such as public officials, community, and academic researchers, sometimes question the source and content of the messages. Many stakeholders want to know additional details to form their own judgments about risks. Effective real-time communications during an oil spill, therefore, must also provide for the rapid integration of risk communications with crisis communications. This paper defines risk communications and proposes a process for integrating crisis and risk communications during significant oil spills within an incident command system (ICS) organization.