



SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

Notification of spills should be made to the nearest HM Coastguard Rescue Centre.

COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY

MCA Counter Pollution & Response **(for Oil & HNS)**
The Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton SO15 1EG

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RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

Coordinating the UK's response to a major oil spill is the work of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) Counter Pollution and Response branch (CPR), formerly the Marine Pollution Control Unit (MPCU). MCA's CPR is based on a regional response with central operational, technical and scientific support. A Regional Operation Manager – Counter Pollution and Salvage (ROM-CPS) is based in each of 3 regions (Scotland & Northern Ireland; Wales & West; Eastern Region), supported by scientists, mariners, cost recovery specialists and logistics support specialists in the MCA's headquarters in Southampton

The national contingency plan ("National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations") underwent a major review in 2000 and was revised again in 2006 to take account of lessons learned during actual incidents and major exercises. Since most spills in UK waters result in shoreline contamination, emphasis is placed on providing training for local authorities, most of which have their own spill response plans. Since May 1998 when the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation Convention) Regulations 1998 (OPRC) came into effect, there has been a requirement in the UK for ports, harbours and oil handling facilities to prepare and submit oil spill response contingency plans to the MCA for approval.

Initial information about an incident is usually reported in the first instance to one of the 19 Coastguard (HMCG) stations around the UK by many sources, eg the vessel in difficulty, passing vessels, observers and the public. HMCG will then instigate search and rescue operations where necessary and this action will hold primacy over any other forms of response. They will also inform the duty ROM-CPS if there is any pollution or threat of pollution. The ROM-CPS then decides the relevant course of action, instigates the appropriate level of response and alerts the relevant people in CPR. In the event of a major incident, the MCA may activate the Marine Emergency Information Room (MEIR) in Southampton prior to the deployment of people and equipment to the scene. Three main control centres may be set up, depending upon the scale and type of incident:-

- a Salvage Control Unit (SCU) – led by the Secretary of State's Representative for Marine Salvage and Intervention (SOSREP), who oversees and approves any salvage operation and can intervene if appropriate;
- a Marine Response Centre (MRC) - led by the MCA to coordinate all at sea counter pollution and clean-up operations;
- a Shoreline Response Centre (SRC) – led by the local authority with technical support from the MCA. This centre coordinates the shoreline cleanup operations. In Northern Ireland, shoreline clean-up is dealt with by the Environment and Heritage Service.



An Environment Group may also be set up at the very early stages of an incident, when a real threat to the marine and coastal environment is considered likely. This group provides environmental advice to all three control units. The Environment Group is made up of representatives of the relevant statutory nature conservation body, environmental regulator and government fisheries department.

Ports, harbours, oil facilities and offshore installations have a statutory responsibility for clean-up in their jurisdictions, ports should be geared up to handle spills of a Tier 2 level and offshore installations, to Tier 3 level.

The MCA has collaborated with other organisations to produce the Coastal and Marine Resource Atlas, part of MAGIC, a web-based interactive map that brings together information on key environmental schemes and designations. The Atlas contains environmental and other resource datasets covering the British coastline and marine areas of the UK Continental shelf, and is designed as a flexible resource for maritime contingency planning and response.

RESPONSE POLICY

The policy for response to oil spills at sea is to allow the oil to disperse naturally unless there is a threat of contamination to coastlines, fisheries or important bird populations. Use of dispersants is the primary response where practical and where the advantages - in terms of environmental protection – outweigh the disadvantages of cost and ecological damage. Under the Food and Environment Protection Act of 1986, only dispersants which have passed the relevant tests may be used. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is the authority responsible for approving dispersants in the UK. Prior approval for dispersant use is needed in sea depths of less than 20 metres or within 1 nautical mile of such depths. Where spraying is impractical, the movement of the oil is monitored and containment and recovery adopted or shoreline protection and/or cleanup carried out.

EQUIPMENT

Government

The MCA has an arrangement with Reconnaissance Ventures Limited for the use of two dedicated surveillance aircraft, a Reims Cessna F406 and a Cessna 404, on thirty minutes notice during daylight and two hours at night. For dispersant application two Lockheed L188 Electra aircraft, with palletized system designed in-house, are ready to spray at the nominated forward base within 6 hours of being called. Another F406 aircraft with an externally mounted, removable, dispersant spraying system is also available. These aircraft are operated from Birmingham International and East Midlands airports.

Since combining the contracts for shoreline and at-sea response the UK Government equipment stockpiles (boom, skimmers, dispersant spraying equipment, hot water washers and other associated equipment) are held primarily in Barnsley with smaller stores at Bristol and Dundee. This equipment is operated and maintained by Braemar Howells,

Private

Most major terminals, especially those handling crude oil, e.g. Fawley, Hamble, Milford Haven, Scapa Flow, Sullom Voe have their own response equipment and small stocks of dispersants. The Thames Oil Spill Control Association (TOSCA) operates equipment for response in the Thames estuary. Several oil companies have established additional stockpiles of response equipment. A private contractor based in Aberdeen, primarily serving the offshore drilling industry, is available for other pollution incidents. Oil Spill Response and East Asia Response Limited (OSRL/EARL), operating from offices in the UK, Singapore and Bahrain, maintains major stockpiles of equipment and although primarily equipped to respond to



worldwide pollution incidents, having cargo aircraft on permanent stand-by, can also respond to incidents in UK waters.

PREVIOUS SPILL EXPERIENCE

The UK has experienced several major oil spills. The BRAER (1993) spilled 85,000 tonnes of crude oil after grounding off Shetland, Scotland. The oil dissipated naturally and little cleanup was required although several salmon farms were adversely impacted. The SEA EMPRESS (1996) spilled 72,000 tonnes of crude oil and bunkers after grounding at Milford Haven, Wales. Dispersant was applied by MPCU contracted aircraft and containment and recovery was undertaken by port authority, private contractor and foreign government vessels. Cleanup of over 70 beaches was carried out by the local councils concerned. Other major oil spills include the TORREY CANYON (1967) and the ROSEBAY (1990). In 2007 the container vessel MSC NAPOLI was beached off Beer Head on the East Devon coast after it ran into difficulties. Once aground, the vessel developed a list, causing the loss of some 200 containers, including products classified as hazardous and noxious substances.

HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

The competent authority for dealing with marine pollution involving HNS is the MCA. The UK's capability for responding to HNS spills at sea is under development. The UK has carried out a substantive risk assessment on the marine transport of HNS in the UK Pollution Control Zone and a study on the fate, behaviour and impact of HNS in the marine environment is underway. The UK details the response to HNS in its NCP. The MCA expects the NCP to run in parallel with, and dovetail into, existing protocols and major incident plans normally invoked when there is an incident involving hazardous substances onshore. The UK's resource pool for HNS marine response consists of three layers, where level two is made up of pre-contracted fire brigades (15 teams of 50 trained fire fighters each) and level three consists of the national HNS Response Team contracted from a private company. The UK has in its emergency response stockpile specialised monitoring and detection equipment and has a contract in place at the national level to provide emergency HNS response teams through a private contractor. The contractor provides appropriate training and equipment for the response teams. The MCA has access to 24 hour advice on chemical hazards from the National Chemical Emergency Centre (NCEC), which also provides MCA with chemical spill modelling capability. The UK has been involved with a number of HNS spills, including ECE (2006, phosphoric acid) and MSC NAPOLI (2007). (Information from EMSA, 2008)

CONVENTIONS

Prevention & Safety					Spill Response		Compensation						
MARPOL 73/78		Annexes III IV V VI			OPRC '90	OPRC -HNS	CLC '69 '76 '92			Fund '92	Supp Fund	HNS*	Bunker
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓

* not yet in force

The conventions are extended to the following areas: Akrotiri & Dhekelia; Anguilla; Bailiwick of Guernsey; Bailiwick of Jersey; Bermuda; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Isle of Man; Falkland Islands & Dependencies; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn Islands; St. Helena & Dependencies; South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands; and the Turks & Caicos Islands. (see separate Profiles where appropriate).



REGIONAL AND BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

Bonn Agreement (with countries bordering the North Sea).
Manche Plan (a bilateral agreement with France).
Norbrit Plan (a bilateral contingency plan with Norway).
A draft agreement exists with the Ireland covering the Irish Sea.
Arrangements exist to aid the Channel Islands & Isle of Man if requested through the Manche Plan.
Member of the European Community Task Force.

Date of issue: December 2011

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