

UNITED KINGDOM

SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

Notification of spills should be made to the nearest Coastguard Operations Centre or National Maritime Operations Centre

COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY

MCA Counter Pollution & Response (for Oil & HNS) The Maritime & Coastguard Agency Spring Place 105 Commercial Road Southampton SO15 1EG	Tel: 07000 405 415 (24hr) +44-2380 329 445/448 Fax: +44-2380 329 446/440 Web: http://www.dft.gov.uk/mca/
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RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

The UK's National Contingency Plan (NCP) was updated in September 2014. It provides a strategic and operational overview for response to incidents of marine pollution from shipping and offshore installations.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT), is designated as the UK competent authority for counter pollution response and is the custodian of the NCP. It is responsible for responding to maritime emergencies 24 hours a day and for minimising the impact on UK interests when pollution occurs, The Scottish Government, Northern Ireland Executive and the Welsh Government would also be closely involved when their areas were affected or at risk.

The Counter Pollution and Salvage (CPS) branch of the MCA has specific responsibility for counter pollution preparedness and response at sea and the management of the UK Government's stockpiles of equipment and dispersant. In every incident the Duty Counter Pollution and Salvage Officer (DCPSO) is normally the first point of contact via a Coastguard Operations Centre (CGOC) or National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC).

The Secretary of State's Representative (SOSREP) represents the Secretary of State for Transport and has responsibility for salvage and containment issues. The SOSREP is empowered to make decisions without delay or recourse to higher authority where such decisions are in the overriding UK public interest.

The UK adopts a tiered approach to spill response. For local, Tier 1 spills, response is managed within the capability and resources of the local authority or harbour authority with the MCA available to monitor the response and support with technical and environmental protection advice as necessary. For Tier 2 spills beyond the capability of one local authority, the MCA may deploy aerial surveillance to assess the extent of pollution and may consider deploying national pollution response resources. Escalation to a Tier 3 or national response would be determined by the MCA. They would establish a Marine Response Centre (MRC) at a location appropriate for the spill which would assume the lead for at-sea pollution response. They would also alert relevant coastal States, the European Community (EC) and European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) if there was a risk of pollution outside the UK EEZ.

The lead for ensuring responsibility for clean-up is:-

- Harbour authority (for pollution on the water, jetties, wharves, structures, beach or shoreline owned by the harbour authority and within the port area)
- Local authority/Northern Ireland Environment Agency (for shoreline pollution)

UNITED KINGDOM

- Owner of property/land (for pollution of jetties, wharves, structures, beach or shoreline which is privately owned)
- MCA (all other areas at sea)

Commercial marine pollution response contractors are engaged under either a permanent arrangement and/or 'on demand' when required to undertake the actual physical clean-up and associated support activities. It may also request the use of additional response capability from partner States within the Bonn Agreement and/or through the EMSA network.

When the pollution threatens the shoreline, a multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Group would be established. This is normally chaired by a senior police officer or senior local authority official, and manages the overall onshore response strategy, dovetailing when appropriate with the at-sea response, developing the long-term plan and the policy and direction of the response.

For protracted shoreline clean-up operations a Recovery Coordinating Group may be required.

Other groups may also be established, including an Environment Group comprising the statutory environmental regulators, fisheries departments, nature conservation bodies and public health bodies plus a range of specialist public sector and non-government organisations.

Where the incident poses a significant threat to health or the environment on land, a Science and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) may be established to provide coordinated advice on scientific and technical issues.

A Premium Monitoring Coordination Cell (PMCC) may be established to initiate, conduct and coordinate post spill environmental monitoring and impact assessment.

Handling of waste is controlled in England by the Environment Agency, in Wales by Natural Resources Wales, in Scotland by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Clean-up operations in the UK must comply with the EU Directive on Waste which establishes a framework for the management of waste across the European Community. This gives priority to waste prevention and encourages reuse and recovery of waste. A Waste Management Team may be established.

RESPONSE POLICY

The Marine Response Centre (MRC) decides and advises on actions to contain, disperse, mitigate and/or recover pollutants. These decisions include the following methods of response: assess and monitor; dispersant spraying operations; mechanical recovery operations and cargo transfer operations.

Dispersants remain a primary UK response to oil spilled at sea. However, legislation prohibits the use in UK water of oil treatment substances unless approved by an appropriate regulatory and licensing authority (the Marine Management Organisation for England and Wales, Department of Environment's Marine Division for Northern Ireland and Marine Scotland for Scotland). The actual use of dispersants and other oil treatment products is subject to strict control. Specific approval is required for any use in water depths of less than 20 metres or within one nautical mile of such depths and will be considered on a case by case basis after advice from the statutory nature conservation agencies, fisheries, marine environmental scientists and marine fisheries agency inspectors has been sought. In deeper waters, the relevant regulatory authorities will normally wish to be consulted beforehand except under force majeure conditions or where the use is covered by a 'standing approval'. Some ports, harbours and oil handling facilities have standing approval to enable them to immediately use a limited amount of dispersant according to terms specified in their approved contingency plan.

EQUIPMENT

Government

UNITED KINGDOM

The MCA has on contract two dedicated surveillance aircraft; a Cessna F406 and a Cessna 404, located at East Midlands or Inverness airports. The F406 can be fitted with a rapidly installed dispersant spray system. This can be used for test spraying of dispersant or for smaller oil spills.

For dispersant spraying, the MCA contract also includes two Lockheed Electra L188 aircraft, ready to operate at the nominated airfield within 6 hours of being called. Each aircraft can deliver up to 15 tonnes of dispersant.

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) operated by the Port of London Authority has a response capability for the Thames estuary. Several oil companies have established additional stockpiles of response equipment. Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL), 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 clean-up 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 Marine Pollution Control Unit (now CPS) contracted aircraft and containment and recovery was undertaken by port authority, private contractor and foreign government vessels. Clean-up 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.

UNITED KINGDOM

HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

The UK details the response to HNS in its NCP. MCA is the competent authority for dealing with marine pollution involving HNS. The UK has in its emergency response stockpile specialised monitoring and detection equipment for mobilisation in incidents involving HNS, including aerial surveillance: (infrared/ultraviolet), forecasting models, devices for measuring toxic atmosphere and other measuring and sampling devices. Its ability to respond to HNS incidents is through commercial contractors who maintain a range of specialist HNS response equipment. The UK does not have any specialised vessels for dealing with HNS spills nor a specialist response team. Response would be provided by industry, through a combination of recognised chemical hazard experts, salvage companies and UK accredited responders. The UK has access to scientific and technical advice through a contract with the National Chemical Emergency Centre (NCEC) as well as a number of contracts for specialist HNS advice.

The UK has been involved with a number of HNS spills, including ECE (2006, phosphoric acid) and MSC NAPOLI (2007). (Information from EMSA, 2013)

CONVENTIONS

Prevention & Safety					Spill Response		Compensation						
MARPOL 73/78		Annexes III IV V VI			OPRC '90	OPRC -HNS	CLC '69	CLC '76	CLC '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

The UK is party to the following agreements:-

Bonn Agreement for Cooperation in dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances 1983 with States bordering the North Sea and English Channel (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, UK)

Anglo-French Joint Maritime Contingency Plan (Mancheplan) which covers counter pollution and search and rescue operations in the English Channel.

Norway-United Kingdom Joint Contingency Plan (Norbit Agreement) for joint counter pollution operations in the zone extending 50 miles either side of the median line separating the UK and Norwegian continental shelf.

UK/Ireland Agreement – a draft plan for effective cooperation in the event of an incident in the Irish Sea which may affect the interests of both or either country.

Anglo/Isle of Man Operating Agreement covers counter pollution and search and rescue operations.

Faroe Islands – a local agreement of mutual support between the UK and Faroe Islands.

European Union – Consultative Technical Group for Marine Pollution Preparedness and Response (CTG MPPR) – an EU level platform for Member States contributing to enhance cooperation in the field of preparedness for and response to accidental and deliberate marine pollution from ships.



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European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) – provides operational services to Member States including a network of stand-by oil spill response vessels, satellite imagery (CleanSeaNet), pollution response experts and information service for chemical spills at sea (MAR-ICE)

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