



# The Good Oil

## Issue eleven

October 2006

Welcome to The Good Oil – an e-newsletter designed to keep people in touch with what's happening in the oil spill response (OSR) area of Maritime New Zealand. Comment/contributions/feedback are welcome and can be emailed to: [steve.corbett@maritimenz.govt.nz](mailto:steve.corbett@maritimenz.govt.nz).

### Latest news

- 1) Invites have been sent out for this year's Regional Council Workshop to be held in New Plymouth on November 29 & 30. This year's theme is based on the off-shore exploration industry and the Workshop will be addressed by Hon Harry Duynhoven, Minister for Transport Safety, Associate Minister of Energy and Member for New Plymouth.
- 2) For your viewing pleasure – the 2006 New Zealand Marine Oil Spill Response Strategy is now available on [www.maritimenz.govt.nz](http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz) under Marine pollution response/publications.
- 3) The Environment Court has handed out two spill-related fines for two separate incidents of oil discharge into Lyttelton Harbour.

The first case involved the 30 year-old Panamanian-registered bulk carrier *Antares*, which had made an unscheduled stop for fuel en-route from Peru to Tasmania in October 2004.

The vessel initially spilled approximately 100 litres of diesel oil into the harbour and was inspected and cautioned by Environment Canterbury (Ecan). Two hours later the vessel had a repeat spill of about 300 litres. Owners of the *Antares* were fined a total of \$70,000 and in his ruling; Judge Jeff Smith gave a clear warning that the level of fines for future offending is likely to increase.

The second case involved the 40 year-old Korean-registered fishing vessel *Melilla 201*.

Ecan served an infringement notice on the owners of this vessel in May 2005, with a penalty of \$1,000, after accidentally discharging oil into the harbour. The vessel again spilled about 50 litres of diesel in October of the same year for which Ecan decided to prosecute. At the sentencing hearing last Friday, the judge fined the owners of *Melilla 201* a total of \$22,000.

Common to both vessels was the fact that they had no save-alls around the bunkering connections on deck, no overflow tanks and no high-level alarms to warn of an impending overflow.

The maximum penalty for marine pollution in New Zealand is \$200,000 compared to \$1,000,000 in Australia.

- 4) Two recent close calls saw Regional teams in action with Environment Waikato looking after a diesel spill after a mussel barge carrying about 10,000 litres sunk near the Te Kouma boat ramp in Coromandel Harbour and Hawke's Bay Regional Council monitoring a trawler with approx 14,000 litres of diesel, plus other oils aboard, aground at Kaiuku at Mahia.
- 5) The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has released its report into the collision between *Global Peace* and the tug *Tom Tough* that resulted in an oil spill in Queensland's Gladstone Harbour earlier this year. The investigation found that a crack in the tug's starboard main engine clutch oil discharge pipe resulted in the system being emptied of oil. The resultant loss of system pressure activated the engine shutdown. The full report is at: [www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation\\_reports/2006](http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2006).
- 6) The Philippines are facing what could be their largest oil spill ever after the tanker *Solar 1* sank off Guimaras Island on August 11. Sixteen of the crew survived but two are still missing.

The Philippine Coast Guard reported that a strong and steady volume of bunker fuel had escaped from the vessel and formed a growing oil slick. The slick had spread to an area covering at least 15 square kilometres. Efforts to contain the spill are becoming increasingly difficult with strong winds and rough seas spreading the oil and making boom use ineffective. Little can be done to seal the leaks due to the water depth.



Spill estimates range from 190,000 to 350,000 litres and it has so far affected 26,000 local people who depend on fishing, damaged about 300 kilometres of coastline, 500 hectares of mangroves and 60 hectares of seaweed plantations, and is spreading toward two nearby provinces.

- 7) An environmental disaster has been averted in South Africa after over 750 tonnes of fuel was removed from the container carrier *Safmarine Agulhas*, which ran aground following engine failure shortly after exiting the port of East London.

South African authorities have decided she is so badly damaged that she is now officially a wreck.

They have effectively over-ruled insurers who have not yet declared the ship a constructive total loss. No further attempt will be made to refloat the vessel.

- 8) The first United Nations pollution experts have arrived in Syria to evaluate an oil spill, which has so far polluted more than 140 km of Lebanese coast.



At least 10,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil has spilled along the Lebanese coast from power plant storage tanks at Jeih, about 20 miles south of Beirut, after they were hit by the Israeli air force.

Environmental officials at the Mediterranean Action Plan said the disaster already rivalled the *Erika* spill off France in 1999 and Lebanon's environment minister said that an additional 15,000 tonnes was expected to follow and a potential spill could reach 35,000 tonnes.

"We have never seen a spill like this in the history of Lebanon. It is a major catastrophe.

"The equipment we have is for minor spills. We use it once in a blue moon to clean a small spill of 50 tonnes or so. To clean this whole thing up we would need an armada," he said.

No clean-up activities have so far been possible due to the ongoing conflict in the area.

- 9) As an interesting sideline – this article makes some good points and ponders what the reaction would have been if the above spill had come from a ship:  
*Reprinted from Lloyds List - Wednesday August 09 2006*

### **Headlines and hysteria: the strange tale of two oil spills (Sam Ignarski)**

*On Monday night the BBC was reporting that the Lebanese oil spill is now the largest spill ever to affect the Mediterranean.*

*The spill was caused by the bombing of the Jiyven power station in south Beirut by the Israeli Air Force several weeks ago, which caused a storage tank to rupture.*

*There is a huge slick of heavy fuel oil now floating around at sea, which has contaminated the coastline of Lebanon and which is continuing northwards in the general direction of Turkey.*

*Maritime readers may be forgiven for not knowing a tremendous amount about this incident, even though the Environment Ministry in Lebanon has compared the spill amount to the "equivalent to a tanker sinking and 20,000 to 30,000 tonnes reaching the shoreline".*

*By way of comparison the iconic Exxon Valdez spill involved 40,000 tonnes of crude oil. Green groups are calling it an environmental disaster.*

*Being none too diligent in my reading of the maritime press during these warm summer weeks, I first learned of this spill in the edition of the Bow Wave e-zine, which appeared on under the aegis of my Quarterpoints colleague Aline de Bievre (<http://www.wavyline.com>).*

*But comparisons with maritime oil spills will only go so far. Many more things would be happening by now had this impressive amount of oil been spilled by a ship.*

*First of all a tremendous amount of publicity would have invested the world's media.*

*Visually arresting images of the stricken vessel and the surrounding mess would have been headline news.*

*A well-known clip of film showing a dying oil-smeared marine bird feebly flapping its useless wings would be making a further appearance on the world's TV sets as a link to the story.*

*Spokespeople from various environmental groups would by now be appearing, calling perhaps for the immediate phasing out of single hulled tankers.*

*Oil response teams would have been scrambled, equipment flown in, booms laid, insurers identified, principal parties identified (or condemned for hiding behind single ship registration).*

*It is probable that the measure of the spill would be expressed in gallons or litres to illustrate the scale of the loss.*

*A fevered search for a cause and, if possible, a culprit would have begun. Some of the crew might already be under detention or subject to dark rumours about onboard sobriety. The initial dispositions of the claims likely to be made by parties affected would also be in motion.*

*Perhaps we would do well to follow the melancholy progress of this oil spill. It is taking place in the singular conditions of armed conflict where the role of insurance is greatly reduced.*

*The government of Lebanon and the power company interests have as good a defence to claims as thinkable under war exclusions. The response to the spill will be greatly handicapped by the conditions in Lebanon and the evident lack of resources immediately available to the parties.*

*The clean up will no doubt be a sad, protracted affair for a country, which was doing its best previously to sell itself as a suitable destination for tourists and sun seekers.*

*What is missing from this picture will be some of the histrionics of maritime oil pollution, a theatre of contradictions where, as in the Exxon Valdez, billions of dollars in compensation are paid out in respect of an incident where loss of human life at any rate was non-existent and the losses to natural wildlife circumscribed by the intense cold of the local environment.*

*Apologists for the oil industry are wont to say that the oil, which from time to time this energy-ravenous world of ours manages to spill into the sea, is a natural product, which decays naturally over time under the influence of the constant movement of the sea and the workings of certain bacteria.*

*Although it is aesthetically nasty, it is often argued, it is more environmentally benign than people imagine. We shall see.*

- 10) The VLCC *Bright Artemis* has spilled around 4,500 tonnes of oil into the eastern Indian Ocean after being holed by the boxship, *Amar*, after going to her aid after she caught fire.

The VLCC sustained a 5 m long, 1m high gash on the starboard side about 1.7 m above the water line after the *Amar* was swept into the tanker by strong winds and waves.

Oil spilled into the water from two damaged tanks before the crew was able to transfer the remaining crude to the other tanks.

The Indian Coast Guard is monitoring the environmental pollution.

"We hope the oil will churn and disintegrate in the high seas, but we are watching closely," said senior coastguard officer SP Sharma.

The crew of the Singapore-flagged *Amar*, was rescued by another vessel and is reported to be safe.

- 11) The volume of new oil tankers delivered into service next year is set to leap 20% to a 31-year high.

Next year's expansion of the global fleet is the result of a surge in shipbuilding orders placed three to four years ago, when freight rates soared on booming oil demand.

Now, however, the shipping market faces a soft patch as new tankers sail into an anticipated slowdown in global economic growth and fears that higher prices may curtail oil use.

Still, shipowners hope forecasts for oil demand growth and increasing long-distance shipping opportunities will occupy the flotilla of new tankers and support freight rates.

## Comms lessons

- 1) This Wairarapa Times-Age story caught my eye from the July floods:

*Masterton police also said a TV One news crew became trapped in flood waters when trying to reach town from Carterton, having ignored two "Road Closed" signs.*

*"Obviously the signs were not a big enough clue," a police spokeswoman said.*

*The reporter and cameraman notified police of their predicament but were pulled clear by a passer-by in a 4WD before police arrived.*

In today's fiercely competitive news environment it seems to be relatively common practice for outlets to go 'over the top' to bring us our news, and especially our pictures.

There's really not much you can do if media want to break the rules. Offering site visits (when possible and safe) and providing the latest and most accurate information should stop this sort of nonsense but otherwise it helps to have a good relationship with Police and to hope that they can deal with the situation.

- 2) From a situation out of your control to one you should have seen coming:

An American politician held a news conference at a petrol station espousing the benefits of energy efficiency and then drove off in a Hydrogen fuel vehicle. Good stunt so far but he was then seen to jump into a gas-guzzling SUV that drove him a walking distance back to his office. Which story do you think got reported?!

- 3) It's worth remembering this old Japanese proverb if you find yourself in a heated media interview:

"Man who raises voice loses argument."

## Quotable quotes

"The freedom of the press works in such a way that there is not much freedom from it."

*Grace Kelly*

"This has been our Achilles heel which has been stabbing us in the back all season."

*David O'Leary*

"You can't play crap for five games and still expect to go through. But for £120,000 a week, they should be able to take \*\*\*\*\* penalties."

*Sir Elton John after England exited the World Cup.*

*Thanks for reading Issue 11 of The Good Oil*

*Steve*