

THE GOOD OIL

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Welcome to *The Good Oil*, an e-newsletter designed to keep people in touch with what's happening in the oil spill response area of Maritime New Zealand (MNZ). Contributions/feedback are welcome and can be emailed to sophie.hazelhurst@maritimenz.govt.nz.

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Greetings,

The first part of the year has been a busy time for the Marine Pollution Response Service (MPRS), and I'm sure it has been for you also. We are continuing to work on the training review, and will be presenting our proposed changes to attendees at the Regional Council Workshop in August.

From this issue on, *The Good Oil*, which has previously been a bi-annual e-newsletter, will change format and become a quarterly publication. Any suggestions, material, photographs or ideas for articles are most welcome and should be emailed to sophie.hazelhurst@maritimenz.govt.nz.

We really appreciate your feedback and comments – and hope you enjoy reading this short round-up of news and events in the oil spill response world.

Training review

The results of a comprehensive review of the Regional Responder and Regional On Scene Commander training courses will be presented at the Regional Council Workshop in August.

MPRS planning and training manager Rob Service says the review has looked at both the training and revalidation components of the courses, and taken into account feedback received from course participants.

Some of the key areas considered as part of the review are:

- initial training versus revalidation requirements
- options and frequency of revalidation training
- exercising as part of revalidation
- role and impact of National Response Team
- impact of requests from industry for response training

Proposed changes to the courses will be put forward at the workshop for comment.

Subantarctic Islands special area plan

Work on a Special Area Oil Spill Contingency Plan for the Subantarctic Islands is in its last stages, with a final draft soon to be sent to the Department of Conservation (DOC) for sign off.

MNZ has responsibility for oil spill response in the Subantarctic islands, the furthest of which is located approximately 870 km south-east of New Zealand. It has been working closely with DOC, which manages the area, to develop a contingency plan which meets the unique challenges of mounting a spill response in the remote and rugged islands.



Subantarctic Islands – Western Cliffs, Campbell Island

Once finalised, the special area plan will be incorporated into the National Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

Listed as a World Heritage Area, the islands are home to vast numbers of birds and sea-mammals. Remote and isolated, many species of birds and plants are endemic to their own small island groups and extremely vulnerable to human disturbance.

“The contingency plan has been developed in response to the rapidly growing cruise ship tourism industry in the area, which brings with it an associated increased risk of an oil spill,” says MNZ environmental analyst Alison Lane.



MNZ environmental analyst Alison Lane and MPRS response planning officer Dayne Maxwell on Campbell Island

Alison, along with MPRS response planning officer Dayne Maxwell, visited the islands as a guest aboard the HMNZS frigate **Te Kaha** earlier this year.

The pair visited several of the Subantarctic Island groups, including Campbell, Enderby, and the Auckland and Snares Islands.

They collected detailed information on shoreline types and assessed areas where people and equipment could be staged and the logistical support needed for any operation in such a challenging environment.

“New Zealand’s Subantarctic is a special place. It is notoriously windy, with extreme weather conditions that can change in a few moments. With limited charts, these are not waters to be taken lightly,” Alison says.

“The harbours and inlets in which the ships anchor are prone to fierce winds and are surrounded by rocky cliffs and reefs.

“At times large fishing vessels and recreational yachts also take shelter in and around the islands.

“There are also moves to develop sub-sea oil resources in the Great South Basin, which further increases the risk of environmental impacts on the area.”

Alison says response options for the islands are very limited due to logistical constraints.

“However, the dynamic nature of the coastline means any spilled oil would be weathered relatively quickly.”

Alison says MNZ staff will continue to work closely with DOC, which is also developing a Coastal Plan that will incorporate controls for ships visiting the islands, to further minimise the risk of a spill occurring.

Tier 3 exercise: Otago

A Tier 3 marine oil spill exercise was held in Dunedin in April. The main aims were to build up the National Response Team (NRT) (around 45 people strong) and to test the incident management system (IMS).

This exercise was held in conjunction with Otago Regional Council (ORC) and started its life as a marine incident, where the Otago tug **Otago** collided with a general purpose cargo vessel outbound from Otago Harbour.

As exercise coordinator, MPRS operations manager Neil Rowarth engineered the actual ship’s agent and the port to report this incident and the subsequent oil spill.

While the ORC oil spill team were dealing with their initial actions and getting their equipment down to Port Chalmers, the regional on scene commander (Otago harbourmaster Jeff Donaldson) placed a call to the national on scene commander (in this instance MPRS general manager Nick Quinn) and asked for Tier 3 assistance.



MPRS general manager Nick Quinn acting as national on scene commander in Otago

The NRT was then mobilised and members miraculously appeared within two hours of being called. Certain members of the MNZ team were also included and arrived to help with the “big one”.

As time passed, the National Oiled Wildlife Team was also mobilised from Palmerston North, and extra people were pulled in from local resources and the New Zealand Defence Force.



The National Oiled Wildlife Team was out in force on the Otago beaches checking local wildlife

The scenario comprised around 60 cubic metres of heavy fuel oil spilled into the harbour (the Brisbane spill was around 200 cubic metres), affecting a huge array of sensitive and valuable environmental resource within the Otago Harbour. From the protected Albatross colony to the inner harbour cockle beds, the impact of this spill was always going to be huge.

Work progressed through the evening in terms of equipment placement, location and preparation for the oil recovery operation the following day.



Auckland Regional Council harbourmaster marine pollution response coordinator Mick Courtneil and MPRS planning and training officer Toni Pressman-Hyde

MNZ deputy director, safety and response services Peter Williams activated the Managers Incident Response Team (MIRT), which tackled issues such as whether a bond could be placed on the spiller. The MIRT is a team based in Wellington that acts on behalf of the Director in all aspects of a marine incident. The team provides a CIMS (Co-ordinated Incident Management System) based response to any marine incident that requires it.

The wildlife group was out around the harbour working out their tactics while waiting for their wildlife cleaning containers to arrive, and booms were deployed in the harbour with oil recovery vessels also playing their part.

Reports from the regions

A short roundup of news from around the country.

Auckland

Hundreds of curious onlookers got to see the Auckland harbourmaster's team in action first-hand in February, after hundreds of litres of engine oil was dumped in the Viaduct Harbour.

The harbourmaster was alerted to the spill during the early hours of February 19 by a viaduct security officer who smelled the oil. The team contained the spill with booms before a crew used a high-tech skimmer to suck up the oil from the surface.

Harbourmaster marine pollution response coordinator Mick Courtneil says the clean-up went well, but the incident could have been much more serious.

"We were fortunate on the day with the conditions, that we were able to contain the spill in the inner harbour," he says.



The ARC clean up team in action

It was also the first oil spill outing for the harbourmaster's new aluminium barge, the Hiki Moana (clean seas). The team uses the barge mainly for the "dirty work", which allows its other boats to be kept clean for harbour patrols.

Mr Courtneil says he believes the engine oil was dumped deliberately. Investigations were unable to identify a particular spiller, and the cost of the clean up was covered by the marine pollution oil spill fund.

The clean-up took a day. One boat berthed in the harbour had to have oil cleaned from it.

Timaru

Timaru's port has a new array of equipment to combat fuel spills in its harbour.

Two Timaru-based companies, The Front Store (a division of Andar Holdings) and South East Resources, have combined forces to build and equip the port's second oil-spill trailer unit.

Environment Canterbury (ECan) regional harbourmaster Tony Whiteley says the new unit, which includes fuel containment

booms and absorption pads, along with a stock of oil dispersant, will be a great asset for the port.



Howard Peeti, South East Resources, Tony Whiteley, regional harbourmaster, Councillor Bronwen Murray, ECan chair navigation safety, Alan Roker, The Front Store, celebrate the new oil spill response trailer for Timaru's port

"It also shows the willingness of local businesses to help in any clean-up operation. Together with the trailer equipped by Sanford that is already available for use at the port, it will be a very useful addition to the other equipment on hand in Timaru, such as additional booms and skimmers."

Depending on availability, the trailer unit could also be deployed for oil or diesel spills in South Canterbury lakes or rivers, as it was so portable, he says.

The chairperson of the council's navigation safety committee Bronwen Murray, also a South Canterbury regional councillor, says the trailer unit is a "brilliant example" of a local joint venture.

"I can't believe how far this port has come in terms of its commitment to looking after its harbour environment – it's absolutely vital work too as PrimePort Timaru is so important to South Canterbury," Bronwen says.

The trailer's exterior paint job includes ECan's pollution hotline number – 0800 76 55 88.

Lyttelton

A Christchurch fisheries company has been fined \$20,000 after pleading guilty to discharging a contaminant into Lyttelton Harbour. The case was heard in the Christchurch District Court in May.

Independent Fisheries Limited admitted that between 100 and 250 litres of fuel oil from a ship it had chartered, the **Ivan Golubets**, had leaked into the harbour water. This action contravened sections 338(1B)(a) and 15B of the Resource Management Act 1991.

The ship was moored at number three wharf in the inner harbour, within the coastal marine area. The harbourmaster arranged for the fuel oil to be cleaned up using a dispersant and costs of \$5,569.09 were paid by the defendant.

Judge Jane Borthwick ruled that while the spill was not deliberate, there was a high level of carelessness or a lack of forethought on the part of the company. This want of care was reinforced because the company had not provided any account of its systems for dealing with emergencies, risk management or fuel transfers, and there was no indication as to what the company intended to do to avoid a recurrence of this incident.

The Judge noted that the discharge, while covering an area of approximately 80 metres by 40 metres (3,200m²) of the sea surface, had increased the level of contamination and environmental degradation of the seabed. She also took into account a previous offence by the company.

While giving credit for an early guilty plea, expression of remorse and payment of cleanup costs, Judge Borthwick imposed a fine of \$20,000. Ninety percent of the fine is to be paid to Environment Canterbury.



Fuel spill from the **Ivan Golubets** into Lyttelton Harbour last year

Kim Drummond, ECan director, regulation, says the case highlights the need for having set procedures to follow when refuelling or transferring fuel around vessels.

"The cumulative effects of such spills on the environment are not acceptable. It is understood that Independent Fisheries have now changed their procedures to reduce the risk of a similar incident in the future," Kim says.

AWE/Prosafe sentencing

The companies responsible for a crude oil spill that polluted the Taranaki coastline 18 months ago were sentenced to a total of \$105,000 in July.

Oil was discovered along a 13 km stretch of coastline north and south of Okato, just south of New Plymouth, on 23 October 2007.

An MNZ investigation sourced the spill to the floating production and storage offtake vessel **Umuroa**. MNZ later charged the Tui oilfield operator Australian Worldwide Exploration (AWE) and Prosafe Production, which runs the **Umuroa**, with illegally discharging a harmful substance into the sea.

Both companies made early guilty pleas to the charges.

Early this month, Judge Stanley Thorburn released his decision, saying the spill had been substantial, and there was a need to send a strong deterrent message in his sentencing.

However, he noted the two companies had dealt with the environmental damage caused by the spill in an “utterly exemplary” way.

“There is nothing more that either of them could have done to mitigate the damage, reimburse for costs and foster goodwill with the local tangata whenua through apology and community gesture,” Judge Thorburn said.

He fined the two companies \$52,250 each.

MPRS general manager Nick Quinn acknowledged the hard work done by the Taranaki Regional Council, along with the local community, specialist groups and iwi, in cleaning up the spill and mitigating its effects on the environment.



Taranaki Regional Council staff surveying the shore after the spill

Mr Quinn said the actions of AWE and Prosafe, in quickly acknowledging the problem and assisting with the cleanup and investigation, were also commendable.

International news

- The Hong Kong registered cargo vessel *Pacific Adventurer* spilled around 280 tonnes of fuel oil into the sea near Moreton Island, just north of Brisbane, on 11 March. Oil washed up on some 70 km of coastline, including the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Island and nearby Bribie Island. MPRS staff members Rob Service and Scott Read crossed the Tasman to assist, along with National Response Team members James Harvey from Northland Regional Council and Dave Marshall from Marlborough District Council. The clean up has so far cost \$A34 million, with warnings the financial impact will be felt for years.

A dispute is brewing between the Australian Government (and the Queensland state government) and Swire Shipping over payment of the cleanup costs.



Cleanup teams on the beach after the Queensland spill

- Meanwhile the *Pacific Adventurer* has been renamed the *Pacific Mariner*. A Swire spokesman said the vessel had been renamed as a result of the bad publicity it had received in the wake of the oil spill.
- Chinese scientists have found a strain of bacteria that munches on hydrocarbons. Hong-Qi Wang and Yan-Jun Chen of the Beijing Normal University and Bo-Ya Qin from the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection isolated *Bacillus cereus* DQ01 from soil at the Daqing oil field, where they noticed it digesting n-hexadecane. Unlike previous efforts by scientists to engineer bacteria to break down oil in cases of oil spills or contaminated sites, this bacterium has evolved on its own.
- After an 18-month ordeal, two Indian sailors, jailed in South Korea after a crane barge collided with their crude carrier *Hebei Spirit* leading to a major oil spill in December 2007, returned home after being acquitted by the Supreme Court in Seoul. Captain Jaspreet Chawla and Chief Officer Shyam Chetan, were imprisoned for a year in South Korea. A crane barge owned by Samsung Heavy Industries collided with *Hebei Spirit* and led to a major oil spill. Last year, a local court acquitted the two men and blamed Samsung for the accident. But the ruling was challenged in an upper court, which found them guilty on charges of negligence. Chawla was sentenced to one-and-a-half years in jail, and Chetan was sentenced to eight months.

The ruling by the South Korean court sparked widespread anger in the international shipping community. In January, another South Korean court granted the two conditional bail and they were acquitted in the Supreme Court on 11 June.



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