

► Welcome to *The Good Oil*, a quarterly 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.

In this issue...

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Montara well head spill 2 Samoan Marine Pollution Steering Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Effects of Oil on Wildlife Conference, Tallinn, Estonia 4 Round the regions – MNZ website – council updates 5 Round the regions – Regional On-Scene Commander course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Round the regions – Gisborne 7 Antarctic Treaty Meeting of Experts 8 International news |
|---|--|---|

Greetings and welcome to the final issue of *The Good Oil* for 2009.

Merry Christmas and Seasons Greetings to all. MNZ wishes to thank you all for your ongoing participation and efforts towards the oil spill response work.

It has been an extremely busy year with several large-scale offshore incidents that New Zealand has been called upon to assist with and the ability to call for regional support has been much appreciated.

While no one wishes for these incidents to happen, the one good thing that comes out of them is invaluable experience for all involved.

Several National Response Team (NRT) members were part of the latest deployment – to Australia to assist with the Montara well head spill. No doubt they will have all learned a great deal from the experience.

Also on the international front, several NRT members attended a conference on oiled wildlife in Estonia in October, which offered useful presentations and workshops on work being done around the world in this field.

Pleasing to note was that New Zealand is held in high regard in this area – a testimony to the excellent work being done at the New Zealand Wildlife Health Centre at Massey University and around the country.

We have a couple of updates to the council section of the Maritime New Zealand website for you to note – hopefully these changes will improve the accuracy of the information we hold in our database.

Please pass on this information to anyone in your organisation or company who uses this part of the website.

Finally, from all of us at Maritime New Zealand (MNZ), we hope you have a very merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

We look forward to keeping in touch in 2010.

Montara well head spill

As reported in the last edition of *The Good Oil*, in October, MNZ was asked to assist the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in responding to an offshore blowout at the Montara well platform in the Timor Sea. The Montara well is located between the Indonesian island of Pulau Roti and Western Australia.

The request for assistance was in line with a long-standing memorandum of understanding between MNZ and AMSA for assistance during significant marine pollution events.

The initial request, on 2 October, was for two responders.

A planning officer was required to provide strategic advice to the incident controller and conduct forward planning for the response.

A logistics officer was to undertake the ongoing coordination of logistical requirements for what was Australia's first major offshore response operation.



The Montara well head in the Timor Sea

Marine Pollution Response Service (MPRS) Manager Planning and Training Rob Service was selected for the planning role and MNZ Safety Auditor Christiaan Moss for the logistics role.

Within 48 hours of the request, Rob and Christiaan were on their way to Darwin. The pair spent the following 10 days based in Darwin as part of the AMSA team.

Subsequently, two more MPRS staff, Manager Operations Neil Rowarth and Equipment Technician Scott Read, and Ra Mako from Taranaki Regional Council also spent similar periods assisting in the response.



On-water dispersant operation underway at the Montara well head spill

The incident had begun on 21 August with an uncontrolled release of gas and crude oil at the Montara H1 ST1 well.

The West Atlas drilling rig was immediately powered down and all 69 personnel on site successfully evacuated.

The initial response consisted primarily of aerial application of dispersants from a Hercules C130 aircraft.

However, this was soon replaced with a combination of on-water recovery and on-water dispersant operations.



Recovery of fresh oil underway at the Montara well head spill

Up to six large off-shore rig tender-type vessels were employed in the response operation, along with daily aerial monitoring flights. On 10 September, 20 days after the incident

began, the West Triton drilling rig arrived from Singapore to drill a relief well and intercept the leaking Montara well.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts an intercept was achieved 73 days after the incident began on 2 November and the pumping of heavy mud into the Montara well began.

However, less than 3 hours later a fire broke out on the platform further delaying completion of the well plugging. The fire was extinguished the following day but resulted in extensive damage.



Extensive fire damage to the platform

The Montara oil is classified as a light crude with a relatively high wax content of 11 percent. In the tropical conditions the oil weathered rapidly and that together with the dispersant and on-water recovery operations resulted in most of the remaining oil forming a waxy sheen.

The waxy residue appeared to have relatively little impact on wildlife and few wildlife casualties were reported. However, the full environmental impact of the spill is yet to be determined.

Rob says it will be some time before all the environmental and socio-economic impacts of this incident become evident.

"There will undoubtedly be lessons for Australia and other countries with an off-shore oil industry, including New Zealand.

"Incidents of this scale and severity are quite infrequent, and those members of New Zealand's National Response Team who were fortunate enough to be involved in the response have gained valuable experience," says Rob.



Recovery of weathered oil underway at the Montara well head spill

Samoan Marine Pollution Steering Committee

Following the September grounding of **Forum Samoa II**, which posed the threat of a large-scale oil spill in Apia Harbour, a workshop was held by the Samoan Marine Pollution Steering Committee in November.

The recently-formed committee is multi-agency and has been formed in accordance with the Samoan Marine Pollution Prevention Act 2008 – with the role of overseeing the establishment of a marine pollution response system for Samoa.



The *Forum Samoa II* on the reef at the entrance to Apia Harbour

MPRS Manager Planning and Training Rob Service attended the workshop, which was sponsored and conducted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

Rob says as the majority of the committee members had little marine or marine pollution experience, the workshop was intended to provide an overview of the principal topics and information that committee members would require an understanding of.

MNZ was asked to facilitate sessions on response systems and techniques, incident management, the role of salvors, and the role of protection and indemnity clubs.

Also included was a session where the **Forum Samoa II** grounding was discussed.

Rob says it was clear the committee members were dedicated to ensuring an effective and efficient marine pollution response system was established for Samoan waters.

“The committee was very aware of the lessons learnt from the **Forum Samoa II** incident and was keen to learn how they could do better if such an event should occur again,” Rob says.

SPREP staff have prepared a draft national plan for Samoa, and the implementation of the plan was also discussed.

Following the workshop SPREP and the Samoan Government have requested MNZ review the plan before it is confirmed.

Rob says it was clear from his time in Apia that New Zealand’s assistance and support during the **Forum Samoa II** incident was appreciated in Samoa.

“The international nature of oil spill response means we must be ready to assist our neighbours in any way we can when called upon.

“It was good to see the work being done in Samoa to build up their readiness to deal with a spill, while also strengthening our relationship with our Pacific neighbours,” says Rob.

Effects of Oil on Wildlife Conference, Tallinn, Estonia

The 10th international Effects of Oil on Wildlife Conference was held 5–9 October 2009 in Tallinn, Estonia.

MNZ’s Jim Lilley is both a National Response Team (NRT) and National Oiled Wildlife Response Team (NOWRT) member and attended the conference. Also along were three other NOWRT members – Kerri Morgan and Helen McConnell of the New Zealand Wildlife Health Centre at Massey University, and Massey contractor Bill Dwyer.

A total of 148 participants from 25 countries and 6 continents attended the conference, addressing the theme “Science, planning and co-operation to minimise the effects of oil on wildlife”.

Participants were addressed in 56 presentations by 40 authors.



Conference participants

The scientific programme ran for four days, and participants also had access to interesting pre- and post-conference programmes, including four short courses (facilities design, response basics, issues of oiled wildlife response, and oiled bird impact assessment) and three practical laboratories (advanced oiled bird washing, post-mortem analysis of oiled birds, and capturing oiled birds).

The conference was organised by Sea Alarm, the Estonian Fund for Nature and Oil Spill Response, in close co-operation with International Bird Rescue Research Center and Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research.

Jim says the conference offered huge opportunities to learn for anyone working in fields relating to oil pollution and its effects on wildlife.

Each of the New Zealand attendees delivered either a paper or a poster on oiled wildlife response in New Zealand and MNZ's role in this area.

The group's first stopover en route to Estonia was in Singapore, where they took time out to visit Oil Spill Response Limited.

"The timing for this was perfect because a new container had just arrived with new wildlife response equipment and we were able to be there and check this equipment out as it was unloaded and inventoried," says Jim.

"The rest of the day was spent checking out facilities at the Jurong Bird Park, before heading to the airport to continue our trip to Tallinn."

Over the course of the conference, Kerri delivered a paper *Oiled wildlife preparedness in New Zealand*.

Bill delivered a paper titled *The establishment and use of containerised wash units for oiled wildlife response in New Zealand*, and Jim delivered the paper, *(Government's) Maritime New Zealand's role in oiled wildlife response*.

In addition to these papers, two posters were presented as well – one by Helen called *Prioritising the treatment of oiled wildlife in New Zealand by conservation status*, and another by Massey University veterinarian Janelle Ward (who did not attend the conference), entitled *Midazolam as an adjunctive therapy for capture myopathy in bar-tailed godwits*.

All papers are available online at http://www.owconference09.org/?page_id=557.



Jim Lilley giving his presentation at the conference in Estonia

This diverse range of subjects demonstrated to those attending the conference that New Zealand bats well above its weight when it comes to oil spill response, Jim says.

"Probably the most gratifying presentation we attended was by Sea Alarm's Roser Gasol, who presented the Country Wildlife Response Profiles database that Sea Alarm has been building since 2005."

In this database, the preparedness of 78 coastal countries across the world (70 countries still to go) has been examined.

Roser presented a first analysis of this data and provided a ranking of countries in four different categories of preparedness. These categories range from 1A (the best) through 1B, 2A and B, to 3 and 4, (4 being the least prepared).



Tallinn, Estonia

New Zealand is one of only 4 countries that have attained the 1A ranking, the others being South Africa, Belgium and the Netherlands.

"This ranking reflects the commitment and hard work put in by the many New Zealanders involved in oiled wildlife response," Jim says.

"We have an excellent network of responders in New Zealand and a fantastic team at Massey. We can be proud that we are among world leaders in our preparedness for an oiled wildlife response."

Round the regions

MNZ website – council updates

Two new updates are available on the Council Section of the MNZ website.

The "Tier 1 Approval Form" has been updated to capture additional information. The changes aim to improve record accuracy within our database and assist with matching to the sites within the regions.

Please use this form for any future approvals.

The *Regional Responder Aide Memoir* has been updated and is available as a PDF file.

Please print a new copy for your files.

Updates are as follows:

- Page 1 (RCCNZ phone numbers)
- Page 5 (oil spill volume calculator)
- Page 20 (RCCNZ phone numbers)
- Page 30 – 33 (new record forms for exercises, courses & incidents attended)

<http://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/Environmental/Secure-council-area/Council-login.aspx>

If the updated forms do not appear, please press the refresh button.

Regional On-Scene Commander course

Congratulations to all who passed the Regional On-Scene Commander (ROSC) course, held at MPRS in June.

Five new ROSCs were appointed following the week-long course and three existing ROSCs had their qualifications revalidated.

The course involved a series of tabletop exercises with participants taking turns at fulfilling the role of ROSC.

The course also tested their media skills, with participants all subjected to on-camera interviews.

Those newly qualified are:

Dave Armstrong – Environment Canterbury

Simon Moran – West Coast Regional Council

Greg Meikle – Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Louise Bennett – Gisborne District Council

Matt Smith – Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre (AMOSC)

Those revalidating their qualification were:

Peter Weissing – Northland Regional Council

Grant Nalder – Greater Wellington Regional Council

Bruce Pope – Taranaki Regional Council

Well done to all.

Gisborne

The Gisborne District Council (GDC) held two exercises in October – a desktop scenario followed by a practical exercise the following day.



The desktop exercise, led by newly-qualified ROSC, Louise Bennett (standing)

credit: GDC

The exercises were led by Louise Bennett, senior environmental health officer at the council and one of the country's newly-qualified Regional On-Scene Commanders (ROSC).

Louise passed the ROSC course held at MPRS in June.

The desktop exercise, held on 29 October, aimed to allow several changes at GDC – including a new ROSC, changes in the planning team and a new wildlife set up – to become integrated into the council's response systems.

The exercise involved council staff, trained volunteers and Department of Conservation, and was overseen by MNZ staff who commended the group on their cohesive team work, quick thinking and leadership.



GDC oil spill exercise held at the junction of the three rivers

credit: GDC

The following day a marine oil spill exercise planned by GDC for the inner harbour was shifted after strong winds and rough seas were forecast.

The exercise was instead held in a car park at the junction of the three rivers – Turanganui, Taruheru and Waimata.

The aim of the exercise was to test the council's oil spill response team capability and strategies to contain oil spills within the city's rivers.

The scenario envisaged a substantial amount of oil spilled in the channel just outside the port.

An operations team was tasked with preventing oil entering the city river network and with collecting as much oil as possible to reduce the spill's impact.

Louise says the exercise was successful and met all the aims and objectives, despite having to shift location.

"The team worked well, incorporating new staff and those in new positions. It was good having MNZ attendance and involvement.

"We had a small number of learning points, which is healthy and useful."

Antarctic Treaty Meeting of Experts

Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) took a key role at the Antarctic Treaty Meeting of Experts to be held in Wellington in early December.

Around 80 delegates attended the meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The meeting examined issues surrounding ship-borne tourism in the Antarctic Treaty Area.

MNZ Director Catherine Taylor welcomed delegates to the meeting, saying it was encouraging to see so many Antarctic and maritime experts come to Wellington to tackle this vital issue.

The meeting programme considered environmental impacts of tourism shipping in the region and ways to mitigate those impacts. It also looked at contingency plans for oil spill response and search and rescue.

“As a country that borders the Southern Ocean and has a responsibility for a huge search and rescue region in the Antarctic, New Zealand is acutely aware of the risks and the challenges that we would face trying to assist a shipping casualty in the Southern Ocean,” Ms Taylor says.

“MNZ takes a strong interest in the Antarctic and is committed to working with our international partners to ensure the best environmental protection possible is in place.

“The Antarctic also poses many logistical issues oil spill response or search and rescue personnel, which is why we are working together to ensure we have the best possible contingency plans in place for emergencies in the region.”

Ms Taylor says MNZ is strongly supportive of improving the links between the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in order to ensure that protective measures are applied to all shipping in the region.

It is only through the IMO that regulation can be extended to cover all vessels, not just those flagged to Treaty Party nations.

These links were assisting in the development of initiatives such as the Mandatory Polar Code – a proposal currently before the IMO which will see guidelines established for ships operating in ice-covered waters.

Also before the IMO was a proposed ban on heavy grades of fuel oil for ships visiting the Antarctic, which would greatly reduce the risks associated with an oil spill in the region.

“New Zealand is a gateway to the Antarctic and we are committed to reducing the risks posed by tourist vessel traffic to the region.”

International news

- On October 30, the Panamanian-flagged oil tanker **Dubai Star** spilled up to 800 gallons of oil during refuelling operations in San Francisco Bay. As many as 18 skimmers and 16,000m of boom were deployed to contain the oil. Beaches were closed and a ban on fishing was imposed. A total of 49 oiled birds were recovered following the spill, with another 20 found dead on the shore. Wildlife carers have so far successfully cleaned and released more than 20 of the birds. Recent reports say there are no lasting health risks from the spill.

- Officials believe ice was the likely cause of a rupture that saw 46,000 gallons of crude oil and water spill over a snow-covered tundra on Alaska’s North Slope in November. BP said an ice build-up put pressure on the pipeline, causing it to rupture on 29 November.



LEVEL 10, OPTIMATION HOUSE
1 GREY STREET, PO BOX 27006
WELLINGTON, New Zealand

TELEPHONE +64-4-473 0111
FACSIMILE +64-4-494 1263

www.maritimenz.govt.nz

Email publications@maritimenz.govt.nz or freephone 0508 22 55 22.

Disclaimer: All care and diligence has been used in extracting, analysing and compiling this information, however, Maritime New Zealand gives no warranty that the information provided is without error.

Copyright Maritime New Zealand 2009: Parts of this document may be reproduced, provided acknowledgement is made to this publication and Maritime New Zealand as source.

New Zealand Government