



The Good Oil

Issue nine

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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 (OSR) area of Maritime New Zealand. Comment/contributions/feedback are welcome and can be emailed to: steve.corbett@maritimenz.govt.nz.

Latest news

- 1) A whirlwind visit to Australia has ended with four Maritime NZ staff getting enormous benefit from being involved in the Gladstone oil spill.

As announced in a 'Good Oil' newsflash Nick, Mark and Dayne from MPRS flew over and I joined them a couple of days later. I arrived at 10am their time and Nick took me for an immediate site tour. Just seeing (and smelling!) the spilled oil was really helpful to complement the little knowledge I have built up and came as quite an eye-opener.



After dropping the others off at the airport I continued 'observing' but was then asked to join the ICC and act as media liaison officer to allow their exhausted team to return to Brisbane.

It was a bit surreal taking calls from ABC, Channel 7 and the like but the Aus media seemed pretty soft to me and I can't imagine the NZ lot putting up with a 5-hour sign-off time for factual information!

The placid and resigned nature of the local residents and some swift conciliatory work from the Minister of Fisheries meant that there were very few people firing shots at the responders, making life fairly controversy-free. Most of the work centred on keeping the community informed of things like, area closures, claim processes and boat-cleaning techniques.

We all got great value out of the opportunity and Mark probably summed it up for all of us, "I've seen images of spills a hundred times in photos but nothing can prepare you for the real thing."

I have an image-based PowerPoint presentation detailing the incident and our involvement that I am happy to circulate if anyone is interested – email steve.corbett@maritimenz.govt.nz.

- 2) An OSR media and community affairs training course was held in Auckland last month, at the end of an OSR Fundamentals course. This was the second course of its type and despite some last minute withdrawals was well received. We will now work out the best way to include this course into the wider training framework.

The MPRS team often assists Regions with planning and running their Tier 2 exercises which involve either desktop or equipment deployment exercises. I am also happy to help out if Regions want to include a media and community component. This could be anything from simulating a few media calls to a full day's session so just email me for further information.

- 3) Planning for the National Exercise (HARD ROCK) continues apace. The exercise will be the first since Exercise Clean Seas at Tauranga in Oct 2000 and is designed to test and evaluate NZ's response to a major oil spill. HARD ROCK will also reflect Maritime NZ's wider role and include security and SAR elements.
- 4) Experts in oil spill recovery and response from all around the world are at London's Excel Centre this week for the Interspill 2006 conference and exhibition. Hot topics on the programme include the responses to the carnage of Hurricane Katrina in the States and the series of explosions that devastated an oil depot in England a few months ago. Nick and Rob are attending from MPRS as are Richard Norman and Alex van Wijngaarden and a party from AMSA. Planning is also underway for SpillCon 2007, to be held in Perth, Australia.
- 5) MPRS hosted a visit by Dr Ed Owens of Polaris Applied Sciences Inc. USA this month. The principal reason for the visit was to run a train-the-trainers 'Shorelines and Oil Spill Response' course in Nelson.

Ed is one of the architects of the internationally recognised Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) system and has many years of oil spill experience ranging from *Exxon Valdez* through the Americas and Russia

to one of the most recent significant spill events, the *Selendang Ayu* grounding in the Aleutian Islands (south west Alaska) in April of last year.



A mix of Maritime NZ and regional council personnel attended the course, which was followed by an open forum to discuss how best to incorporate SCAT into New Zealand's response system. Both the three-day course and the open forum were a resounding success, due in particular to Ed's vast marine pollution experience and his skill as a communicator and teacher.

In marine pollution response terms, the 'net environmental benefit' of this course and the open forum was a significant enhancement to our knowledge of foreshore assessment, and a plan for the implementation and maintenance of a SCAT capability in New Zealand.

- 6) French authorities say a collision between two liquefied petroleum gas carriers at the Donges oil terminal on the River Loire produced only "slight pollution". Officials said the collision caused a spill of not more than 30 tonnes of heavy fuel, creating a slick five or six kilometres long between the terminal and the estuary of the Loire.

The collision occurred after the 6,051 gt Antigua and Bermuda flagged *Sigmagas* experienced steering problems after leaving its berth in front of the Total oil refinery at Donges. It collided with the 4,693 gt British flagged *Happy Bride*, which was coming into port with empty cargo tanks. It is understood one of its fuel tanks was breached by the bulb of the *Sigmagas*.

- 7) Sydney's Port Phillip Bay had "a lucky escape" from a major oil pollution incident after a laden oil tanker hit the bottom while sailing under pilotage through the heads inbound for Geelong in January. 61978 gt crude oil tanker *Desh Rakshak* sustained holes in its forepeak tank and a water ballast tank on the port side. The vessel is double-hulled and none of its cargo tanks were breached.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau is investigating the incident but Port of Melbourne Corporation staff have studied the records of the vessel's transit and say it appears to have been sailing outside the Great Ship Channel for "a considerable distance and time".

- 8) French judicial authorities have set aside a two-month period starting on October 30 for the long-awaited trial of those accused of responsibility for the sinking of the 36,285 dwt tanker *Erika* more than six years ago. On trial before the Paris criminal court will be four corporate defendants — Total and two of its subsidiaries and Italian classification society Rina — and 11 individuals. Among the latter will be: the master of the *Erika*, its owner and his associates, the ship management company, and the Total head of shipping.

The principal charges against the defendants are causing marine pollution and endangering or complicity in endangering human life. In addition, three officers at the maritime prefecture in Brest and one member of staff at the regional surveillance and rescue centre will be on trial on charges of having deliberately failed to take action to prevent a casualty.

Comms lessons

- 1) Don't complain about being quoted out of context!
Every quote is taken out of the context of the entire interview and conversation. If your quotes don't stand on their own, then you failed, not the reporter.

Your interview preparation should involve turning your key messages into precisely the quotes you want to see after the interview.

- 2) Worth a watch - the George Clooney film 'Good Night and Good Luck' for some insightful commentary on television in America during the 60's – much of which still rings true today.

Quotable quotes

"If you take the scrum out of the equation, we played well."

Former Australia coach Eddie Jones, defending the Wallabies' defeat by England.

"If you take the assassination out of the equation, the President and Mrs Kennedy quite enjoyed the drive from Dallas to the airport."

Mike Carlton (Australian broadcaster) disagrees.

"Every journalist has a novel in him, which is an excellent place for it."

Russel Lynes

"With the possible exception of things like race results and stock market tabulations, there is no such thing as Objective Journalism. The phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms."

Hunter S. Thompson

Thanks for reading Issue 9 of The Good Oil

Steve

Some information sourced from Lloyd's List.