

Paper 6: THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

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Overview and Organisation

In South Australia the SSC for the State is provided by the Department of Environment and Planning.

The role played by the SSC has been that of broad 'environmental' co-ordination. Most time has been taken in dealing with minor or 'nuisance' spills, at terminals or outports, from industrial storage and from poorly maintained or designed drainage systems. These 'nuisance' spills range from a few **litres** of sump oil to 20 tonnes of bunker oil. They can ruin the aesthetics of a linear park or coastal lakeside sub-division!

The co-ordinator provides a focal point for various disciplines and groups from which information can be obtained and/or to which information can be distributed.

During a spill the SSC has provided a 'filter' to the many different inputs from the scientific and environmental community. This has allowed the **OSC** to attend to his prime role.

The SSC has the responsibility to know where information and expertise are available and to draw on them. 'Standard answers have **been** prepared for many media/public enquiries, e.g.

How 'poisonous' is an oil spill?

How will it affect animals?

How should it be removed from - feet, boats, birds etc?

Response Planning

Mapping of sensitive areas/cleanup priorities in consultation with various groups.

Publish records of above in easily understood format.

Educational role for

P u b l i c

O p e r a t o r s ,

Administrators/Politicians

Maintain lines of communication with particular expert bodies.

- Evaluate industry contingency plans, for terminals, refineries and exploration operators.

Research

Real Time Role

- Be able to appreciate severity of a spill with perhaps no more information than its approximate location and size.

Advise OSC on type and scale of scientific response needed and the practicalities of doing this promptly, e.g. 'finger printing' oil, spill modelling etc.

Take responsibility to initiate required action • e.g. this could range from 'do nothing' other than notify Wildlife and Fisheries authorities to a major response.

Keep written and visual records.

If the response plan and information is **adequate**, much of the work should be to authorise pre-arranged action via a flow chart.

A trial of 'real time' events was provided in South Australia a year ago. An oil spill was simulated over 2 days; 'Exercise Gulf Spill'. The scenario had the tanker 'Fortune' in collision with HMAS **Nonsuch** 'at Port Stanvac, a terminal in the middle of **Adelaide's** 60 kilometres of coastline. A spill of 1500 tonnes was reported.

The exercise was a test of communications; Murphy's Law was invoked liberally. The stamina of the response team was well tested and highlighted the **need** for adequate relief crew in real events.,

Follow up

Assist OSC to decide **when** is a credible time to cease clean-up.

Check waste disposal arrangements and long **term** action.

Implement any follow up monitoring. (Photo/video records at least).

Publish and distribute results.

Costs and Resources

The State to date has met costs on an ad hoc basis. Most spills have not involved activating the National Plan.

No S.A. State Authority has made specific allocation of money for contingency planning.

The role of the SSC is a part time one filled from the general marine environment/pollution **area**.
No specific manpower allocation is made for the task.

A major cost in follow up monitoring has been for chemical analysis.

Experience in Implementing the Role of SSC

Training Seminars for clean-up operators.

Sensitive areas. State Map.

Inland spills.

Kangaroo Island spill.

Database compilation.

Port **River spill** and follow up monitoring.

Mangrove impact experiments.

Offshore drilling and **contingency** plans.

Environmental Impact **Assessment** and **contingency** plans for new oil terminal.

Operation 'Gulf Spill' • training exercise.

F u t u r e D i r e c t i o n s

- Formalised contingency plans giving clean-up **priorities** based on sensitivity and/or feasibility of clean-up action need to be prepared.
- Most marine community distribution in S.A. is mapped only at very broad scale, if at all, e.g. **seagrass/mangrove** distribution.
- Inshore **bathymetry** is poor.
- Continue and improve education program.

Standardisation of analytical techniques.

- Post- Spills Impact and monitoring need guidelines for extent and areas for priority,
- Put National Plan documents on, say, Macintosh software • much easier to access and update, perhaps **'Hypercard'**.