

## Paper 12: OSC FIELD ORGANISATION

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### Introduction

The response to an oil spill is an exercise in team work and co-ordination with the size and complexity of the spill dictating the scale of the team required. If the spill is extensive, virtually all resources available within the region where the spill occurs may need to be mobilised.

This paper outlines the field organisation and support staff required to assist the On Scene Co-ordinator and discusses his role and responsibilities.

### Scope

The scale of the organisation employed in an oil spill response will be determined by the size and nature of the threat and potential impact of the spill. The organisation available to the OSC should be structured so that it can cater to the scope and complexity of a particular operation. It should therefore be flexible enough to deal with small incidents as well as being capable of handling major incidents requiring co-ordination **between** various **response organisations** and the control of substantial resources of men and equipment.

In order to minimise **delays** in the initial hours of a major spill it is essential that the organisation is in place before a spill occurs.

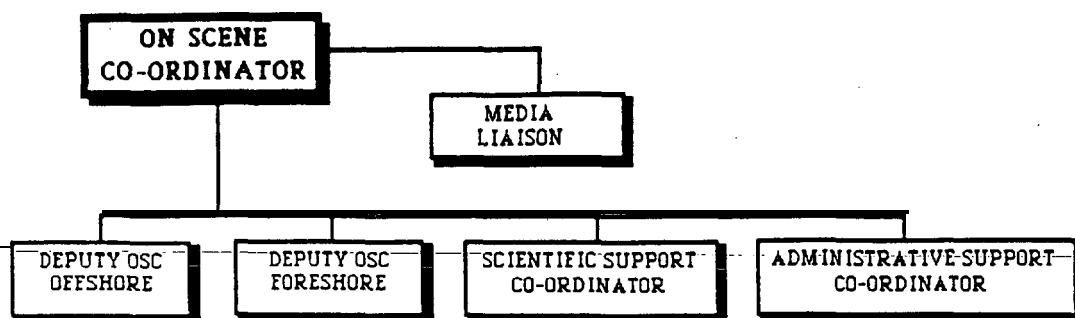
An integral part of this organisation is a formal reporting mechanism which allows all interested people and **authorities** to be contacted and kept **informed**.

### Field Organisation

An advance operations **centre** should be established close to the scene of an incident staffed with Federal, State and other personnel, including representatives from **the** oil industry as required. From this **centre** the OSC will direct overall response operations and co-ordinate activities of the various bodies involved in a clean-up operation. In co-ordinating an effective response, the OSC will be assisted by key

personnel (figure 1). Depending on the severity of an **incident** these personnel will include the following:

- . Deputy OSC (foreshore).
- . Deputy OSC (offshore).
- . Scientific Support Co-ordinator (SSC)
- . Administrative Support Co-ordinator (ASC)
- . Media Liaison Officer



**Figure 1**

It is generally envisaged that, as the OSC is the person appointed by an authority to take direct charge of clean-up operations, he will have **close support provided** by the State Oil Pollution Committee. An efficient communications link using **telephone**, facsimile, telex, and, if necessary, a radio network, is therefore seen as one of the **first facilities established** between the **OSC's** advance operations centre and the support centre accommodating **members** of the State Committee.

In addition to members of the State Committee, the support centre will be manned with as many staff as is required to provide full back-up support to personnel manning the advance operations centre.

Experience, both nationally and internationally, has highlighted the need for well defined media relations procedures following a major oil spill. A lack of adequate procedures may result in what is an otherwise well conducted oil spill response operation receiving bad publicity.

To prevent this occurring it is important that there is **adequate** media support. This can be achieved by the provision of a Media Liaison Officer (MLO). The **MLO** will operate from the advance operations centre and be responsible for liaising with **representatives** of the media. His role would, be to provide sufficient information and facilities to satisfy press, parliamentary and public inquiries. All information provided to the media must originate either from the OSC or MLO.

## Activation of Response

Response action following an oil spill can be separated into four relatively distinct phases:

reporting and alerting  
evaluation and mobilisation  
containment and **recovery**  
clean-up and disposal.

In actual practice these four phases may follow consecutively but more often overlap.

A first priority in activation is the reporting of the spill to the authority having responsibility for combating the spill. The potential seriousness of the spill is evaluated and further action is determined.

Actions to combat, contain and clean up the spill should be initiated as soon as possible following receipt of the spill report and assessment of the situation. The decision to commence these actions should be based on the best possible information about the spill. To obtain this information it may, in some cases, be necessary to send an **observer** to the spill site to overfly the scene before the final size and composition of the response organisation can be determined. Once commenced, response operations will be conducted under a unified command controlled by the On Scene Co-ordinator.

## On Scene Co-ordinator (OSC)

National and international experience in **dealing** with marine oil spills clearly indicates that a single authority, or On Scene Co-ordinator, **must** be appointed to take overall responsibility for co-ordination of activities if a response is to be successfully accomplished. **Recognising** this, the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil, Glossary of Terms, defines the On Scene Co-ordinator (OSC) as "the person appointed by an authority to take direct charge of operations to combat a pollution incident".

The On Scene **Co-ordinator** is responsible for the co-ordination and direction of pollution control efforts at the scene of an existing or potential oil spill. The OSC will be charged with the responsibility for the direction and deployment of available resources to initiate and continue oil spill countermeasures, including containment, recovery and/or dispersal, foreshore clean-up and disposal functions. First and foremost a decision maker, he must be flexible and capable of selecting the **most appropriate course of**

action from a number of available **alternatives**. He must be familiar with a variety of oil spill combat response options in order to carry out **effective** combat within the limitations of reasonable expenditure. Additionally, he must be capable of maintaining close co-operation between authorities to allow rapid deployment of response equipment and resources (figure 2).

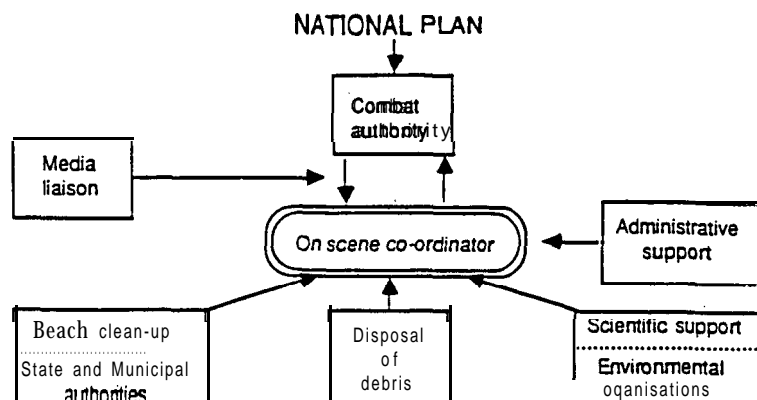


Figure 2. Example of cooperation between OSC and clean-up authorities.

## Responsibilities of the On Scene Co-ordinator

In responding to an oil spill, the OSC must be capable of selecting the most appropriate method of response. His responsibilities are:

- determine pertinent facts about a particular spill, the nature, amount and location of the discharged oil; the probable movement and rate of travel of the oil; its impact on human activities and the environment; the resources and **installations** which may be affected and the priorities for their protection.
- determine the extent of the response necessary.
- determine the location of the advance **operations** centre and the scale of support staff required.
- determine the extent to which the assistance of **associated** authorities and resources are required.
- initiate and direct combat **measures**, clean-up and disposal operations.
- initiate appropriate level of **documentation** and supporting data needed for effective cost recovery action.
- determine the degree of hazard existing and if **necessary** arrange for crowd control procedures to be implemented.
- ensure timely release of information through the media liaison officer.

- arrange collection of oil samples for analysis.

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- preparation of a report covering all aspects of the spill and response operation.

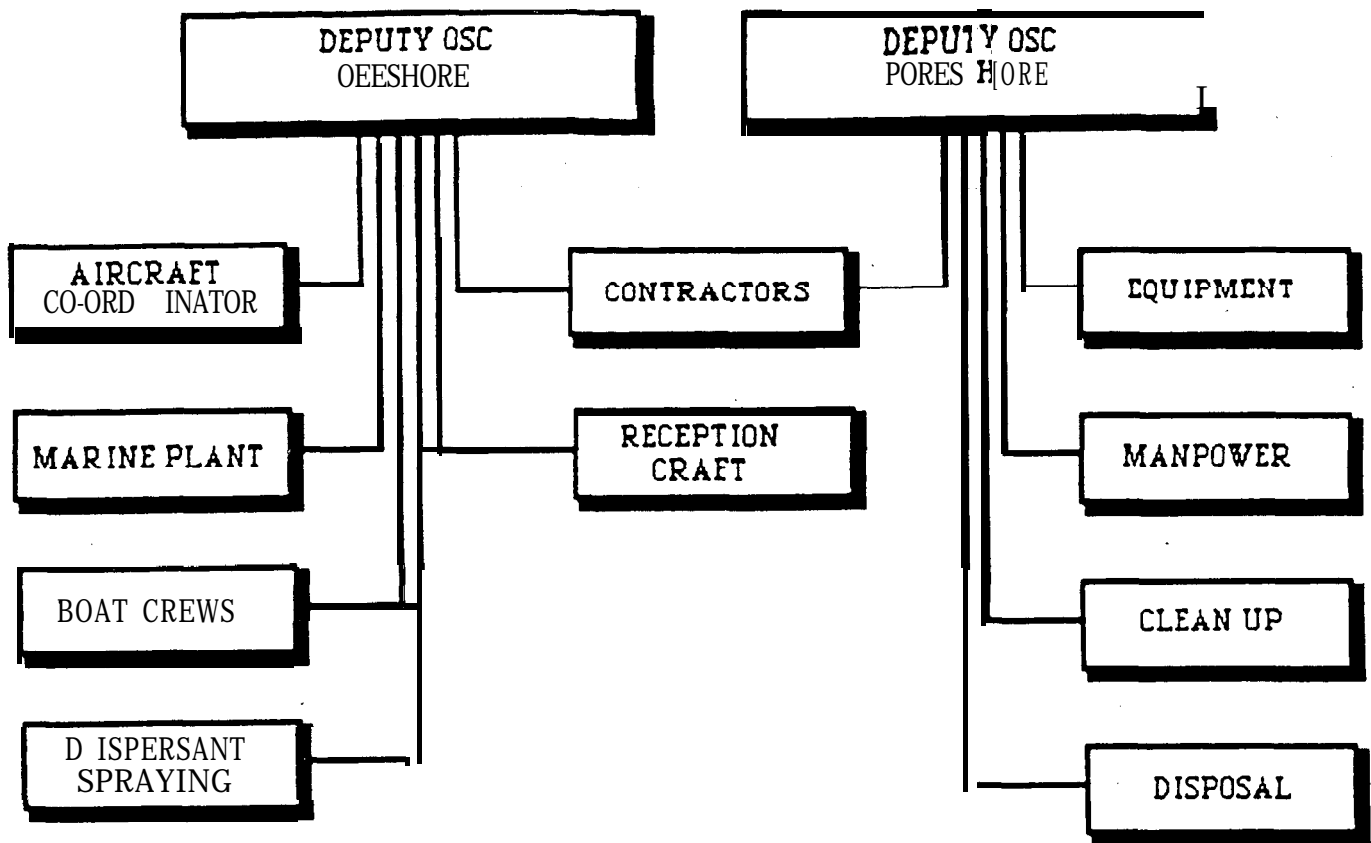
To assist him in meeting his responsibilities, the OSC will be assisted as required by key personnel assigned to specific areas and tasks.

### **Deputy On Scene Co-ordinators**

The deputy on scene co-ordinators will be responsible for tasks in clearly specified areas (figure 3) and will provide advice and recommendations to **the** OSC to assist him in achieving the most effective and economic response. In the absence of the OSC a deputy will act in that capacity.

Other responsibilities of the deputies will include:

- translation of the policy and direction of the OSC into an effective clean-up and disposal **program**.
- ensure a flow of information from the clean-up area to the OSC and attend regular planning meetings to discuss progress and strategy of clean-up operations.
- make recommendations to the OSC based on developments as they occur within their area of operation.
- maintain effective use of clean-up personnel and equipment
- ensure that safety of personnel is paramount at all times and that personnel and equipment are not being used beyond **their** limitations.
- receive weather forecasts and ensure relevant personnel are informed.
- in the absence of a **dedicated** communications **officer**, set up a working communications system.
- ensure that adequate recording data is being **supplied** to the Administrative Support Co-ordinator's staff.



**Figure 3**

### Scientific Support

~~One of the reasons for taking action following an oil spill is to minimise environmental damage. To~~ enable the OSC to take the most **effective** course of action it is important that he be provided with accurate environmental information and advice. **Scientific** support provides this information and advice which requires co-ordination and access through one individual, the Scientific Support Co-ordinator (SSC) (figure 4).

The Scientific Support Co-ordinator will co-ordinate the input from all environmental interests and provide the OSC and his deputies with a balanced assessment of environmental priorities within the area threatened by the spill.

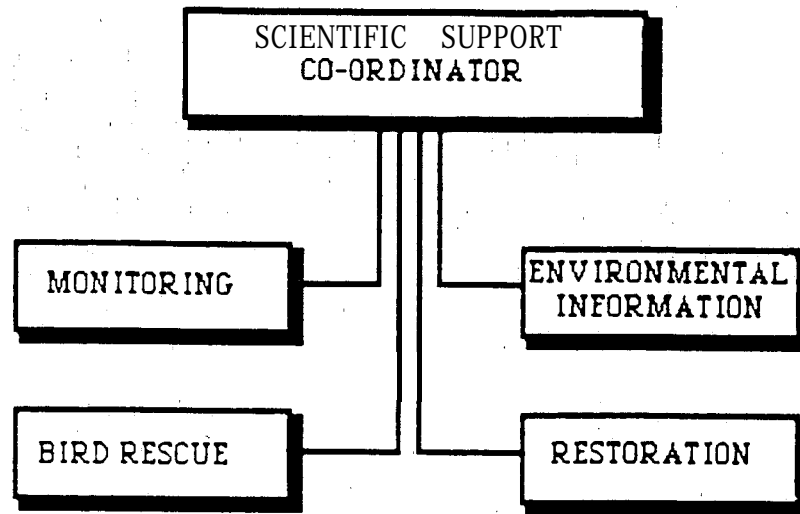


Figure 4

### Administrative Support

One of the most important tasks in an oil spill response is to accurately document the history of the, incident. It is therefore essential that the OSC has an Administrative Support Co-ordinator (ASC) on the team to ensure that this task is carried out. Dependent upon the size and complexity of a particular operation, the ASC will make certain that sufficient support staff are available to oversight the planning and monitoring of all administrative activities (figure 5).

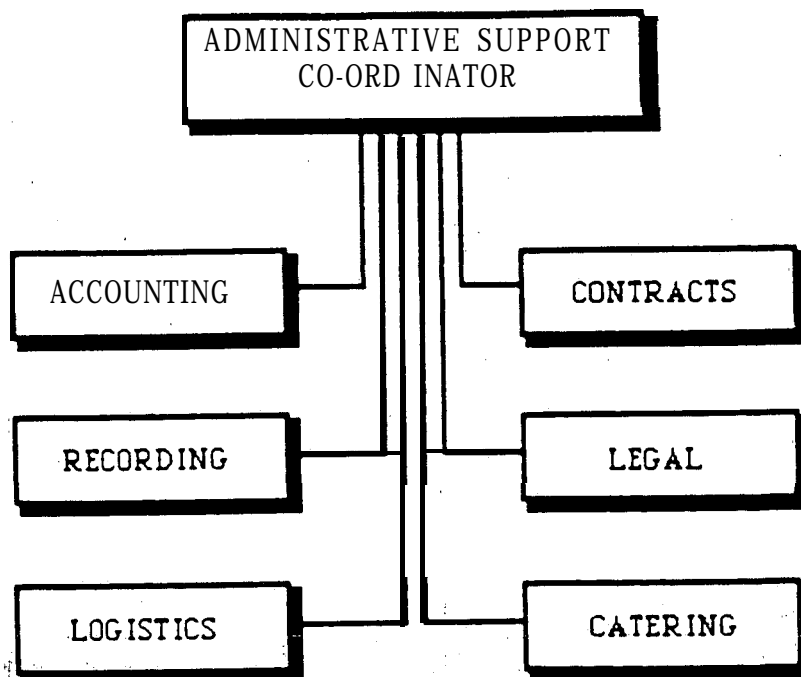


Figure 5

## Summary

The type of field organisation **employed** in an oil spill response should be structured so that it can cater to the scope and complexity of a particular operation. It is not necessary to plan in detail for the maximum credible incident but the arrangements should be sufficiently flexible to be easily adopted or enlarged to deal with a major spill or a particularly complex and time consuming operation. An example of an OSC field organisation designed to cater for a major spill is shown at figure 6.

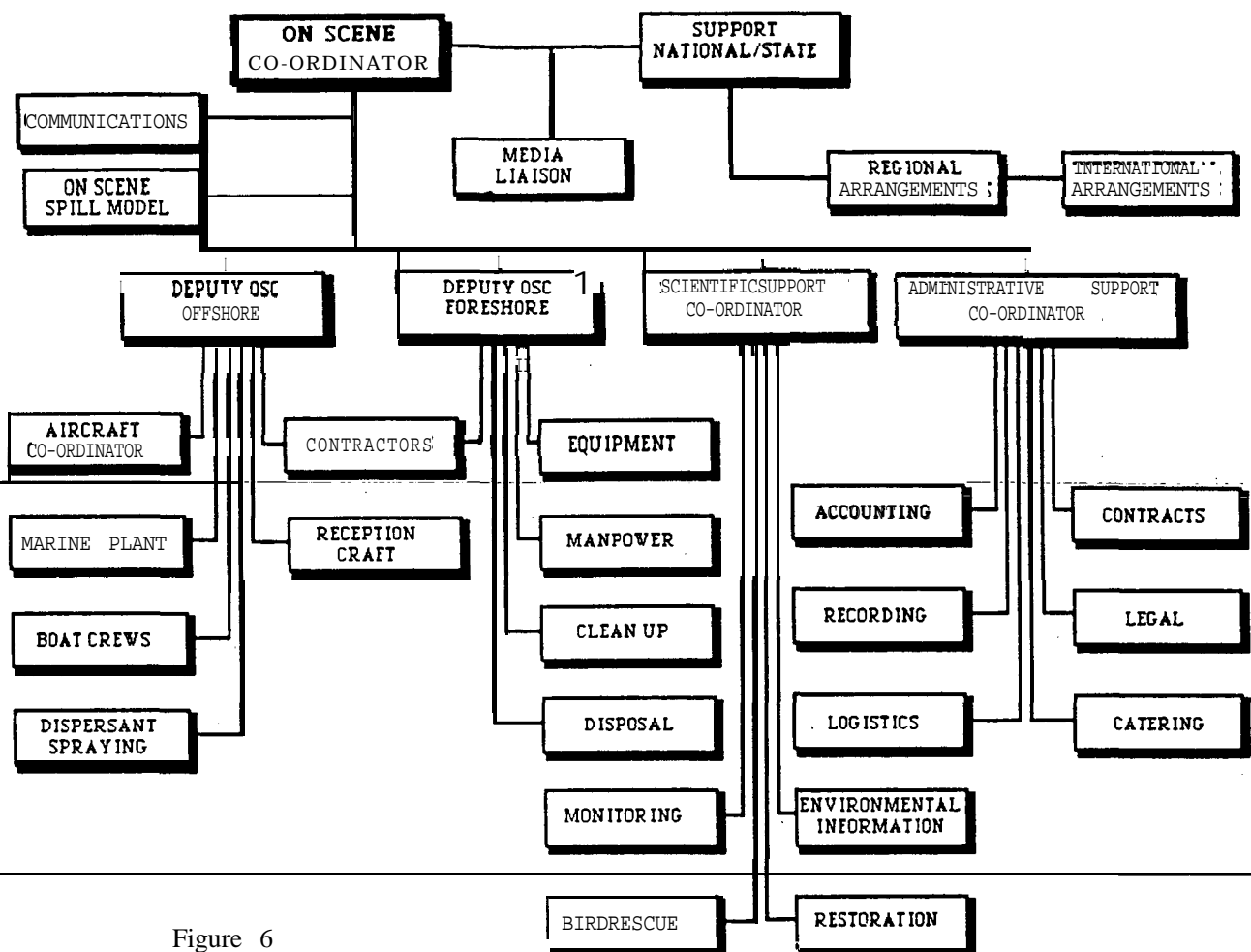


Figure 6