

USA: DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL UPDATE



ROBERT, La. — (center) Rear Adm. Mary E. Landry, the federal on-scene coordinator for the Deepwater Horizon incident, talks with U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad Allen, (right) before his speech to the members of the unified command. During Allen's visit with the unified command, he also met with the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, and discussed joint response efforts. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael De Nyse

The Unified Command (US Coast Guard, Mineral Management Service (MMS), in collaboration with BP and with inputs from other concerned parties) has established an excellent facility at www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com for the regular release of news on the spill. ISCO recommends this site to readers who wish to receive up to the minute progress reports. Additionally, the EPA has launched an information website at <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>. Media coverage has grown exponentially over the last few days and, with all this available, it would be superfluous for us to continue to précis developments on a daily basis.

When the last ISCO Newsletter was sent out we were hopeful that efforts using ROVs with special tools to activate the BOP would be successful. There also seemed to be at least a possibility that the combined effects of dispersant spraying and natural dispersion assisted by rough weather would prevent shoreline impact by the oil that had already been spilt.

Sadly, the situation has become much worse. As of Wednesday, 28th April NOAA revised the estimate of the amount of oil leaking from the damaged riser from 1,000 to 5000 bbl/day and it was also reported that there were not two but three points where the oil was leaking. Efforts to arrest the leakage have so far been unsuccessful.

So far, work on dealing with the spill on the sea surface has been largely based on conventional spill response technologies and success has been limited. Containment-recovery operations need favourable weather conditions and a rate of encounter that cannot be achieved with thin films of oil. The same considerations make it difficult to corral oil with sufficient thickness in fireproof booms for sustained in-situ burning. Subject to amenability of the oil to treatment, dispersant spraying is effective but there is a question as to how long spraying operations should be continued and supplies are not limitless. High asphaltine content restricts the available time window for successful treatment.

The application of subsea collection systems (domes / coffer dams and systems to transfer collected oil to surface tank vessels) should in principle be possible but has never been done before at such depths. It could be a good solution if the technical problems can be resolved, allowing time for a relief well to be drilled. BP is working on this and, if there is no other breakthrough, it may be the best hope.

A new technique that has been experimentally tested involves the subsea treatment of the oil with dispersant at the point where it is escaping from the damaged riser. The initial result appears to have been visually effective but more evaluation will be necessary.

Another idea would be to "crimp" the 2' diameter riser below points of leakage and it has been said that the technology to do this does exist. However such a measure would not be without risk. The possibility of cutting the pipe and installing a new blow-out preventer has also been mentioned. Following the sinking of the rig, the pipe is already crimped and it may be that this is responsible for restricting the flow. In both cases the engineering challenges would be high and if failure were to

result in an unrestricted flow the rate at which the oil is spilling could increase by a factor of ten or even more.

Meantime, the inevitability of shoreline impact driven by prevailing winds prompted an acceleration of work to deploy coastal protection booms and a large scale mobilisation of shoreline clean-up resources. Government has classified the spill as a SONS (Spill of National Significance), a measure that provides the option to utilise military resources. Arrangements for recruiting and training volunteers are in hand. Fishing vessels are helping with boom deployment. Wildlife protection organisations are ready for action. With over 70 response vessels, numerous aircraft and thousands of personnel, the sheer scale of the response operations is amazing and continues to grow daily.

Spill response contractors in other parts of the USA, including ISCO members, have been placed on formal stand-by and are making preparations in case mobilised.

ISCO received several responses to its international appeal for ideas / technologies / experience that could be of value. These embraced a range of options including information on sub-sea collection systems and other ongoing research projects but nothing as yet that has been trialled or proven in deepwater locations. ISCO Member of Council for the USA, Dr Manik Sardesai, will be continuing to evaluate and prepare summaries of inputs received for the benefit of the technical team at Unified Command.

On an international basis, ISCO is now receiving enquiries from members and others who are asking if they could or should be contributing to the effort. Will there be shortages of experienced people? Will more equipment or materials be needed? Are there problems that require specialised know-how, equipment or techniques that may have been developed elsewhere and can be made available?

To answer these queries, ISCO is recommending that those who think they can make a useful contribution should send to ISCO short (one page only) emails describing how they may be able to assist. Responses will be processed as they are received, information circulated and follow up action initiated as appropriate.

As the scenario develops, this can become a two-way process in which ISCO can go out to the response community to enlist help in resolving specific problems or needs encountered by those in charge of the on-scene operations. There is a vast amount of knowledge out there, and as an international organisation embracing professionals worldwide, ISCO is in a unique position to tap into this resource. ISCO will be holding its AGM in London on Tuesday this week and will be addressing the further development of its technical support for the response to a spill that may potentially be the worst ever experienced in the US.

IMO EXPRESSES SYMPATHY OVER GULF OF MEXICO OIL RIG DISASTER

IMO, the London-based United Nations Agency responsible for shipping safety and the prevention of pollution from ships, has expressed its sympathy following the 20 April explosion and subsequent sinking of the drilling rig Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in loss of life and impact on the marine environment.

IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos has written to His Excellency Mr. Louis B. Susman, Ambassador of the United States to the United Kingdom, to convey the Organization's compassion and condolences to all affected by the accident, while also welcoming the swift deployment of emergency response and search and rescue operations, together with the conduct of a comprehensive accident investigation, the outcome of which, once submitted to IMO, would be examined thoroughly so that any lessons learned may, as appropriate, be introduced into the Organization's regulatory regime expeditiously, to the benefit of the global maritime community and the marine environment.

IMO is closely monitoring the situation from both its Headquarters and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Centre for the Wider Caribbean (REMPEITC-Caribe), located in Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles. <http://www.imo.org/>

IMO: PROTOCOL TO BRING INTO EFFECT LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION REGIME FOR HNS SET FOR ADOPTION

A Diplomatic Conference to consider, for adoption, a draft Protocol to the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and

Noxious Substances by Sea, 1996 (HNS Convention), was opened by the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos at IMO Headquarters in London on Monday (26 April) ([see also IMO Briefing 14/2010](#)).

The draft Protocol is aimed at bringing the HNS Convention into effect and intends to address practical problems that have prevented many States from ratifying the original Convention, which, despite being adopted in 1996, has, to date, only 14 ratifications and is some way from meeting the conditions for its entry into force.

In his [opening remarks](#), Mr. Mitropoulos said that the Conference should aim to achieve the “unanimous adoption of a robust, effective, workable and equitable civil liability regime for HNS-related damages. Such an outcome will not only confirm the continued relevance of IMO in the regulation of shipping but will also enhance its reputation as an efficient and effective agency within the UN system.”

“By bringing this Conference to a successful conclusion, we will demonstrate to all, including politicians and societal interest groups, our undeniable ability to regulate successfully complex issues that demand a concerted, global approach if they are to be addressed convincingly and with lasting effectiveness. An additional benefit, particularly pertinent in this year dedicated by IMO to the seafarer, will be the legal protection to be afforded by the HNS Convention, once it enters into force, to seafarers, who may suffer personal injury, or to their families in case of seafarers’ deaths arising out of an HNS incident,” Mr. Mitropoulos said.

http://www.imo.org/Newsroom/mainframe.asp?topic_id=1859&doc_id=12820

AUSTRALIA: AMSA’S STRATEGIC VISION 2010-2025 PUBLISHED

This includes details of short and longer term environmental protection strategy challenges. An interesting schematic shows coastal locations of pollution incidents over the period 2000-2010 with a breakdown of categories – oil, chemical, packaged HNS, etc.

The latest AMSA Newsletter “AMSA Aboard” advises that “AMSA’s Strategic Vision 2000-2025 provided a sound basis for the advice AMSA provided to the Minister regarding improvements to navigation safety in the Great Barrier Reef area, including the extension of the current ship reporting system to the southern portion of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

You can download the Strategic Vision at <http://www.amsa.gov.au/Publications/documents/2010-2025.pdf>

UK: PROPOSAL FOR FORMATION OF NEW DANGEROUS GOODS ASSOCIATION

Don Johnston of ISCO Associate Member, DG & Hazmat Group, writes “David Ritchie in Glasgow, Scotland has asked me to send out this invitation to register your interest in setting up a Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor Association.

A group of people, including David, have planned a meeting of interested people in Solihull [West Midlands of the UK] on Tuesday, June 1 2010. The aim of this inaugural meeting is to consider the formation of a British Professional Association for anyone involved with the transport and/or carriage of Dangerous Goods, they have formulated some speakers of note to assist with the possible creation of a new body.

David, apart from undertaking his Masters in Environmental Management, certainly has a broad background in the Industry - Carriage of dangerous goods by road instructor; Dangerous Goods Safety Advisor, trainer and consultant since 1999; Dangerous Goods by air (Civil Aviation Authority approved for UK) and sea instructor; Technical consultant to National Dangerous Goods Training Consortium; Member of the Training Advisory Panel for the Department for Transport (DfT) in Great Britain, specifically interested in DG driver training; Chartered Fellow Institute of Logistics and Transport; Chartered Member of Institute Occupational of Health and Safety.

David’s email address: david@ritchiestraining.co.uk

USA: KATRINA POLLUTION RIVALS EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL

The storm surge produced by Hurricane Katrina caused hazardous substances to be released in volumes nearing the famous 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska.

That’s according to a newly released report from the Society for Risk Analysis which is calling for better “risk-based” designs for oil and chemical storage facilities in the future. The report says about eight-million gallons of petroleum was released when Katrina slammed into the Gulf coast in 2005. That alone was about 75-percent of the amount of oil spilled in Alaska.

Most of the oil leaked from storage tanks that failed, while some spills were created by the shut down and restarting of production processes. More: http://mystateline.com/fulltext/?nxd_id=155015

USA: MARINES JOIN CHEMICAL ATTACK DRILL IN NEW YORK CITY

The New York Fire Department and the U.S. Marine Corps last week conducted response exercises for a chemical attack and other simulated acts of terrorism in the city.

Firefighters and members of the Marines' Chemical Biological Incident Response Force unit on Thursday dealt with the mock release of a dangerous chemical in the subway system, a bus explosion, a collapsing building and detonations of two improvised explosive devices, according to a Marine Corps press release.

The Marines aided the firefighters by venturing into a fake subway tunnel that was filled with smoke to identify the chemical deployed in the attack. Marines also decontaminated "victims" by spraying and scrubbing them down before sending them to fire department medical crews. Read more at: http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20100426_6847.php

USA: WHITE HOUSE FOCUS ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM GETS SCRUTINY

The Obama administration's push to address the specter of nuclear terrorism has some proliferation experts fretting that the White House isn't as focused on the more likely scenario of being attacked with chemical or biological weapons.

Last week's nuclear-security summit in Washington took steps to thwart attempts by al Qaeda and other terrorist groups to acquire the fuel for a nuclear bomb, which White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan called "one of the greatest threats to our national security."

But some proliferation experts worry that chemical and biological weapons are much more likely to be used in a terrorist attack, and that the administration and Congress hasn't adequately addressed this threat. Read more at:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703763904575196040000877392.html?KEYWORDS=DHS>

NEW EDITION OF ITOPF HANDBOOK JUST PUBLISHED



The 2010/2011 edition of the ITOPF Handbook is now available. The Handbook contains a wealth of valuable information and guidance for those likely to be involved in spills of oil and chemicals from ships. This year's edition contains updated information on oil spill statistics, compensation and staffing. Information is also provided on ITOPF's technical and information services, the fate and effects of marine oil spills, clean-up techniques, organisation of spill response and planning, status of international conventions and ITOPF publications.

[Browse the pages](#) of the ITOPF Handbook or [download](#) the full version in PDF format (3Mb) Hard copies of the Handbook are also available. They are free to ITOPF Members and Associates, as well as to closely related groups. Single copies are also available to others on request - contact [Terry Goodchild](#). <http://www.itopf.com/news-and-events/#handbook>

REMEDIATION: MAY EDITION OF TECH DIRECT NOW AVAILABLE ON LINE

TechDirect's purpose is to identify new technical, policy and guidance resources related to the assessment and remediation of contaminated soil, sediments and ground water. Click on: <http://www.clu-in.org:80/techdirect/td052010.htm>

QATAR: OFFSHORE MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE – CALL FOR ABSTRACTS OPEN

Offshore Middle East and its host, Qatar Petroleum, invite you to submit an abstract for the 3rd annual *Offshore Middle East Conference 12 - 14 October 2010* at the Qatar International Exhibition Centre in Doha, Qatar. Conference topics include environmental concerns. The deadline for submissions is 18th May, 2010.

More info at: http://forms.events.pennnet.com/fl/forms/ome/online_abstract_main.cfm

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