

## CROIERG: THE TANK WATCHERS

An article from ISCO Member, Brian O'Connor, Secretary of the Canberra and Regions Oil Industry Emergency Response Group (CROIERG) in Australia



***Two decades and counting, CROIERG has become the byword for disaster prevention and containment in Australia's road tanker sector. But who are they? What do they do? And how do they operate?***

Based in the nation's capital, the Canberra and Regions Oil Industry Emergency Response Group (CROIERG) is a not-for-profit organisation whose primary objective is to respond to road tanker accidents using large resources of spill control, containment and clean-up equipment available at a moment's notice. The group was formed in 1989 following a road tanker rollover on the Federal Highway near Canberra. The incident resulted in a spillage of more than 30,000 litres of petroleum sparking widespread criticism.

"There had been heavy rain in the area and the product entered a fast flowing creek, which was connected to a river that fed into one of the surrounding towns' water supply," recalls Brian O'Connor, Secretary for CROIERG. "Unfortunately at the time, we did not have accessible spill response equipment available in the Canberra region, which meant we had to organise some to be brought over from Sydney and that process took several hours.

"As expected, the media fallout was brutal with the response deemed unacceptable. As a result, members of the Oil Distributors and Petroleum Product Cartage Contractors in the Canberra and nearby Queanbeyan would get together to discuss solutions in catering for such contingencies. Soon after, CROIERG was born."

According to Brian, CROIERG today is now recognised nationally and boasts a strong membership with approximately 40 companies on board and more than 20 equipment sites spread across NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. CROIERG's group concept operates on a 'mutual aid' basis for the supply of equipment, not labour.

"CROIERG at present has 30 trailers, 28 of which are specialised spill response units containing a large amount of the equipment needed to cater for petroleum products incidents. These trailers include a special oil



skimmer unit and a product pumping unit as well. In addition, we have three more on the way,” he says.

“A large supply of back-up equipment is kept in the CROIERG store at Canberra, and we also station backup supplies at other NSW and Victorian regional sites in Dubbo, Shepparton and Wagga Wagga. But to use the equipment also requires the appropriate accreditation from the Australian Government, which is why we have now developed training modules.”

To prepare each member for any worst-case scenario, CROIERG would join forces with the Transport Industries Skills Centre (TISC) of Canberra to develop the Dangerous Goods Emergency Response Training Program. The National Bulker tanker Association (NBTA) became involved for the Stage Two Course, which concentrates on responder practical aspects. “While it’s great to have all kinds of spillage equipment at our disposal if necessary and have regular group awareness sessions, primarily we’re about prevention and the best way to minimise risk is to develop expertise,” Brian says.

According to Brian, while the program is aimed at assisting transport companies meet their legal obligations as well as training its members to respond to tanker rollover emergencies, it can also serve other industries.



“The Australian Dangerous Goods Code legislates that you must have the correct qualifications to be able to respond to a road tanker incident,” he explains. “That’s why we will continue to make significant investments in the Dangerous Goods Emergency Response Training Program.”

“In fact, it is the only ‘nationally accredited’ course for emergency tanker response. At the completion of this course people who successfully complete the Stage Two Responder Course obtain an Bulk Tank Emergency Incident Responders Card that is recognised by AFAC (Australasian Fire Authorities Council).”

Conducted by the TISC, at their Sutton Road Training Complex in Queanbeyan, the Dangerous Goods Emergency Response Training Program is structured into a two-part competency-based course.

The first part referred to as ‘Course in Fuel Transportation Emergency Planning and Response’ deals specifically with emergencies from the whole-of-organisation perspective and is aimed at a company’s designated response manager, adviser, team leader or any company personnel responsible for the design, development and or implementation of emergency response policies.

“This part of the course is somewhat theory based where it teaches you how to manage yourself in a situation where there’s been a tanker rollover or crash; trying to maintain your poise, executing a plan and delegating responsibilities accordingly,” Brian says.

The second part termed ‘Transport Emergency Recovery Operations’ is more hands-on, putting the individual or group into situations where techniques in recovery and containment are taught. “In comparison to part one, the second course is where we aim to simulate the pressure that comes when you’re actually at the scene of a rollover or crash,” Brian says. ‘That’s why we have set up a tanker that is on its side, and all of the participants are dressed in chemically resistant attire, along with all the safety equipment they’ll be using.

“It’s quite deliberate and ‘full-on’, but that’s the only way to prepare these operators for these types of emergency situations. After all, when you’re dealing with dangerous goods elements on site, anything can go wrong and if not competently trained, the results can have deadly consequences.”