



The Baltic Sea region comprises Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The Baltic Sea is one of the largest brackish water systems in the world

THE RISK OF OIL SPILLS

Oil movements within the Baltic are dominated by the export of Russian crude and refined oils, which now exceed Russian oil exports through the Black Sea. The primary export route has been through Ventspils (Latvia) with lesser routes via Butinge (Lithuania) and Tallinn (Estonia), the latter for fuel oil only. Inauguration of the Primorsk terminal at St. Petersburg in 2001 is leading to a steady increase in tanker traffic volume. As a result, Russian exports through the Baltic States have been scaled back to avoid transit fees. The Primorsk terminal has a storage capacity of 500,000 tonnes and is linked by pipeline to Siberian crude oil production fields. About 12 million tonnes of oil is transported annually, with the prospect of a substantial increase, possibly up to 50 million tonnes through enlargement of existing facilities and the building of a new terminal at nearby Vysotsk.

Because of draft restrictions in the Gulf of Finland and restricted access to the terminals through a labyrinthine archipelago, tanker size is limited to 150,000 tonnes DWT. Severe winter ice conditions create an additional hazard to navigation in the Gulf of Finland. Ice cover is prevalent generally from November to May although the conditions and extent of coverage vary from year to year. As the only country at risk from becoming completely ice-bound in winter, Finland places particular importance on the use of icebreakers and ice-strengthened ships to maintain the principal maritime trade routes the year round. Severe storms and bad visibility in the winter months have been a contributory factor in a number of major incidents in the Baltic.

To improve maritime safety and avoid collisions, Finland, Estonia, and Russia are working on a new marine traffic control system for the Gulf of Finland. However, this Vessel Traffic Service is not scheduled to begin operations until 2004. Meanwhile, and following a severe winter in 2003 with sea ice thicknesses approaching one metre, efforts are being made on a regional basis to improve the ice classification

standard of tankers visiting the Gulf oil terminals and to agree co-operative procedures for maintaining safe navigation, particularly in winter conditions. The oil spill risk implications of heavy tanker traffic in the Gulf of Finland are likely to remain significant as any prospect for opening a VLCC terminal in the ice-free port of Murmansk, together with the large-bore pipeline network necessary to supply it, lies far in the future.

In the central Baltic the tanker routes generally run along the southern coasts, away from the islands of Bornholm and Gotland. Both major and intermediate spills have occurred along the central Baltic coasts of Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland. Oil transport to and from the Baltic Sea necessitates navigation through the Kattegat and the Great Belt, a series of narrow and congested passages between Denmark and Sweden presenting an increased risk of groundings and collisions. Despite traffic separation schemes, including confining the passage of deep draft vessels to the Great Belt, incidents resulting in major and intermediate spills have occurred in this area.

The traffic in northern Gulf of Bothnia is low in comparison, with only limited amounts of refined products carried. No major or intermediate spills have occurred there. Thus, the risk of spills in the Baltic as a whole is considered medium. This rises considerably in the eastern approaches the eastern entrance and drops appreciably in the northern region.

Major tanker spills of over 5,000 tonnes in the Baltic Sea Region since 1974

Vessel Name	Quantity spilled		Country	Year	Cause
	(tonnes)	(Type)			
TANKER URSS 1	22000	CRUDE	RUSSIA	1977	FIRE/EXPLOSION
GLOBE ASIMI	16000	FUEL (CARGO)	LITHUANIA (formerly Russia)	1979	GROUNDING
ANTONIO GRAMSCI	5500	CRUDE	LATVIA (formerly Russia)	1981	GROUNDING

THE STATE OF PREPAREDNESS

All of the countries in the region have ratified the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, 1992 (The Helsinki Convention). The scope of the Convention is very wide, but oil spill control forms a central part. Each Contracting Party has drawn up a national contingency plan and joined with neighbouring countries to form subregional bilateral or multilateral plans for a combined response to pollution incidents. Particular emphasis is given to periodic joint exercises for oil recovery at sea.

The close integration of the response capabilities in the region allows quick and effective use of resources from neighbouring states in preference to national stockpiles located further away. This represents a significant modification of the classical tiered response concept in which international assistance is normally mobilised only in major incidents beyond national capabilities. The strategy has paid dividends in several major spills in the Baltic during which appreciable quantities of have been recovered with ships from up to five different nations operating under a single command.

Each coastal state maintains a Tier 1 capability to combat minor spills in ports or terminals. A number of countries, particularly Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Poland have well developed tier 2 resources in order to respond to larger spills including those from passing tankers.

All countries in the region have ratified the 1992 Civil Liability Convention with the exception of Estonia which remains a party to the 1969 Civil Liability Convention. All countries, with the exception of Estonia again, are parties to the 1992 Fund Convention. Six of the nine countries have ratified the OPRC Convention.



BALTIC SEA

REGIONAL PROFILES

A Summary of the Risk of Oil Spills & State of Preparedness in UNEP Regional Seas Regions

STATUS OF CONTINGENCY PLANS, TIERED RESOURCES AND CONVENTIONS

	Competent National Authority	National Plan	Clean-up Resources		Subregional Agreement	MARPOL	OPRC '90	LLMC '76	CLC '69 CLC '92	FUND '92	Intervention '69/'73
			Tier 1	Tier 2							
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	'69		
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Germany	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Latvia	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		'92	'92	
Poland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	'92	'92	'73
Russia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			'92	'92	'73
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	'92	'92	'73

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