



# HONG KONG

## SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

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## RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

The Pollution Control Unit (PCU) of the Marine Department (MD) of the Hong Kong Government is responsible for handling oil discharges into the sea. It has developed a maritime oil spill response plan (MOSRP) based on the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention (OPRC 1990), which integrates robust government coordination with active community and stakeholder engagement.

Depending on the location, type and scale of the spillage of an incident, a coordinated response is mobilised involving multiple government departments, commercial entities, auxiliary services and local stakeholders to ensure an effective and timely reaction.

To maintain and enhance preparedness, PCU organises an annual oil spill response joint exercise with participants from government departments and local oil companies. These drills test communication, and operational capabilities of both public and private sectors in responding to major ship-source oil spills, reinforcing Hong Kong's commitment to maritime environmental protection.

## RESPONSE POLICY

In general, containment and recovery are the primary response methods for marine oil spills. However, under specific conditions – including the sensitivity of water areas, spill location, weather forecast and other relevant factors – dispersant use may be considered a viable and scientifically-justified option.

Before any dispersant application, the MD consults closely with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). Only dispersants listed and approved by the EPD may be deployed. The use of dispersants in ecologically-sensitive areas – such as near mariculture zones, critical industrial water intakes and designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest – is strictly prohibited, except in exceptional circumstances where no other feasible response option remains, and only as an absolute last resort to prevent greater environmental harm.



# HONG KONG

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## EQUIPMENT

### Government

The MD has outsourced its oil spill response and cleaning service to a qualified contractor equipped with a dedicated fleet of vessels and comprehensive anti-pollution resources, enabling rapid and effective deployment during spill incidents. The MD can also mobilise government-owned vessels that are readily adaptable with dispersant spraying systems to augment response capacity.

In addition, the department maintains a substantial inventory of oil spill response equipment, including various sizes of oil containment boom and skimming units, as well as helicopter-slung dispersant applicators. The Flying Services of the Hong Kong Government are detailed within the MOSRP to perform aerial surveillance, equipment transport and application of dispersant.

### Private

There are a number of private oil spill contractors in Hong Kong. Oil companies operating in Hong Kong also have a variety of equipment to combat oil pollution, including that for containment, recovery and spraying.

## PREVIOUS SPILL EXPERIENCE

In 1977, the container vessel ADRIAN MAERSK grounded off Lamma Island, spilling approximately 3,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil. Despite extensive dispersant application, significant quantities of oil reached the shoreline, necessitating labour-intensive manual cleanup operations.

In 1990, the barge HOI FUNG No.1 sank within a typhoon shelter, spilling 190 tonnes of waste lubrication oil. The spill was largely contained by the sea walls and cleaned by mechanical means.

In 2017, the chemical tanker GLOBAL APOLLON collided with a container vessel in the Pearl River Delta, resulting in the loss of 1,016 MT of palm stearin. Impacts were felt across Hong Kong Island, Lantau Island and Lamma Island, prompting a coordinated response involving both offshore containment and shoreline cleanup efforts.

## HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

To address the unique risks posed by HNS in Hong Kong waters, the government has developed a Maritime Hazardous and Noxious Substances Spill Response Plan. This comprehensive framework establishes a coordinated multi-departmental response to HNS incidents in the waters of Hong Kong.

The MD, EPD and the Fire Services Department play key roles in managing such incidents. In line with its approach to oil spill response, the MD has an outsourcing arrangement with a qualified private contractor that provides specialised HNS containment, recovery and decontamination services – ensuring rapid, scalable and technically-sound response capabilities.



# HONG KONG

## CONVENTIONS

Prevention & Safety					Spill Response		Compensation						
MARPOL 73/78		Annexes III, IV, V, VI			OPRC '90	OPRC HNS	CLC '69, '76, '92			Fund '92	Supp Fund	HNS*	Bunker
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓

\* not yet in force

## REGIONAL AND BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The MD has signed a cooperation agreement with the maritime administrations of Guangdong, Shenzhen and Macao to adopt a regional maritime oil spill response plan for the Pearl River estuary.

The aim of this plan is to enhance regional cooperation and practice in the event of a major oil spill incident occurring in any of the neighbouring ports.

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