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SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

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RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

The National Oil Spill-Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) delineates the duties and responsibility of various stakeholders, namely the Central and State organisation/ Ministries, State Governments, Port Authorities and Corporations, and the oil industry. The Indian Coast Guard, part of the Ministry of Defence, is the designated national authority for oil and HNS spill response in Indian waters under the NOS-DCP, which was promulgated in 1996. The last full update was made in 2015 but parts are regularly updated (such as recent updates on dispersants or HNS). The latest edition of the National Plan encompasses preparedness and response for HNS incidents. The NOS-DCP comes under the purview of the National Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Home Affairs.

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The Indian Coast Guard is responsible for maintaining and implementing the NOS-DCP and acts as the Central Coordinating Agency for combating oil and HNS pollution in various maritime zones, except in the waters of ports and within 500 m of offshore platforms, refineries and associated facilities. Each of these facilities is responsible for spills and should have the capacity to respond within their own jurisdiction (as outlined below).

The Director General Coast Guard (DGCG) is the Central Coordinating Authority (CCA) and would direct the various aspects of pollution response operations assisted by the Seaboard Commander and various regional and district commanders, as appropriate. Crisis Management Groups (CMGs) exist at national, state and district level. The national Crisis Management Group (NOS-CMG) for marine spill emergencies is chaired by the Defence Secretary, and provides management, operational, technical and environmental advice and support to the combat agency, as required. DGCG delineates the duties and responsibility of the participating agencies of the CMG. The Director (Environment) at Coast Guard HQ serves as the National On-scene Commander (NOSC) in the event of a spill of national significance. The NOS-DCP also outlines arrangements for spills at regional, district, state and facility level.

According to the National Plan, oil handling facilities and offshore installations would be expected to handle Tier 1 incidents and respond to spills in their designated area. However, the Statutory Agency (Coast Guard or State Government authority) would take over the operation if the spill were beyond the capability of the facility concerned or where the response capability has not been developed, with assistance from other National Plan stakeholders as required. The equipment would be utilised for large-scale shipping incidents as per the requirement (paragraph 4.3.3 of NOSDCP).

In ports, the port operator or relevant State Government authority would be responsible for handling the response, with assistance from other National Plan stakeholders, as required. Tier 1 equipment for pollution response up to 700 tonnes is required to be held by port facilities and oil terminals and installations.

For shoreline response, State Governments of coastal states would be responsible for coordinating the district and local administration and operation of the National Plan, as per the provisions of the National Disaster Management Act, 2005. State Governments of coastal states would be supported by their regional Pollution Control Board (PCB) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). A number of local administrations such as Forest Department, Directorate of Environment, State Disaster Response Force, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department could be involved at a regional level. At a national level, the Ministry of Shipping, Director General of Shipping (DG Shipping), the Mercantile Marine Department, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, in addition to the Indian Navy and Coast Guards might be involved, depending on the nature and severity of the incident.

The responsibilities of other support agencies are outlined in the NOS-DCP.

The update of the Merchant Shipping Act in 2025 marks a significant legislative update, particularly with the introduction of new provisions addressing marine incidents and emergency response. Notably, the revised Act incorporates the Wreck Convention and the Salvage Convention, aligning national law with key international maritime instruments. In addition, the 2025 Act now expressly grants the central government authority to take all necessary actions to safeguard the country's maritime borders. It also mandates that every port handling more than 10 million metric tonnes of cargo must have at least one tug capable of rapid deployment from a short office, to be implemented by July 2026.

RESPONSE POLICY

According to the NOS-DCP, mechanical containment and recovery is the primary response option at sea. The Coast Guard has issued national guidelines for the use of dispersants and insists on prior approval for their use. The environmental sensitivities of the areas are normally taken into consideration before dispersant use can be authorised. It is essential that the dispersants are tested and certified by the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa or such recognised laboratory, for use in Indian waters.

Bioremediation has been used to treat oil in previous cases in India, in particular as a waste treatment technique. However, this and in-situ burning are both under investigation to determine their technical feasibility.

Under the NOS-DCP, recovered oil is to be stored in temporary pits until it can be transferred to reception facilities.

EQUIPMENT

Government

In addition to Tier 1 equipment, the Coast Guard maintains stockpiles of equipment at its pollution response centres at Mumbai, Chennai, Port Blair and Vadinar. The Coast Guard operates three dedicated pollution response vessels. The Coast Guard also operates a fixed wing aircraft (Dornier 228), and a helicopter (Chetak) for roles including pollution response. Stocks of dispersant are additionally held at each Coast Guard station / air station.

The Indian Navy and Air Force would provide fixed wing aircraft or helicopters to conduct aerial surveillance or provide logistic support to move personnel and materials to site.

The Ministry of Shipping and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas would provide tankers or tank barges for storage of recovered oil.

Coastal state authorities, district administrations, public works/civil defence corps would provide personnel and equipment, as required, for shoreline clean-up.

Private

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has a stock of booms and dispersant at Mumbai. There are also other private offshore operators and response contractors with stocks of equipment. A number of supply vessels are equipped with ship-board spray systems.

PREVIOUS SPILL EXPERIENCE

The Coast Guard has experience in response activities based on incidents, regular exercises and involvement in related activities. They are also developing to be the spill response leader in the Indian Ocean.

The LAJPAT RAI in Bombay Port (1984) and PUPPY P (1989) occurred offshore but led to shoreline oiling. Oil from the MAERSK NAVIGATOR spill in 1993 was monitored by Coast Guard aircraft and treated with dispersant from a Coast Guard cutter. In 2010, containership MSC CHITRA was involved in a collision in the approaches to the Port of Mumbai, India, spilling approximately 800 tonnes of IFO 380 and losing more than 300 containers, including dangerous goods. The Indian Coast Guard initially responded to oil at sea with dispersants. Oil subsequently stranded along shorelines to the south and east of Mumbai, including extensive mangrove and mudflat areas. International assistance was brought in to help manage and supervise the local shoreline response effort.

A collision between a product tanker and LPG carrier in Chennai in 2017 resulted in oiling of over 35 km of shoreline consisting of sandy beaches, rip-rap and port structures. Shoreline clean-up involving primarily manual techniques took place over 2 ½ months. The Coast Guard was involved in the SSL KOLKATA in 2018, where an explosion occurred on board the containership, a fire broke out, and the ship subsequently ran aground.

Further to domestic incidents, the Indian Coast Guard takes a proactive approach in responding to regional incidents. Notably, this includes the NEW DIAMOND in 2020 and X-PRESS PEARL in Sri Lankan waters in 2021. The 2020 explosion and subsequent fire that occurred on the fully laden VLCC NEW DIAMOND had significant contributions by the ICG. The Indian and Sri Lankan Coast Guards and

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Navies jointly responded to the fire on board and the Indian Coast Guard applied dispersant in response to oil leaked from fuel tanks. The ICG also provided assistance during the WAKASHIO incident in Mauritius in 2020.

HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

Response policies and procedures for spills of HNS are similar to those for oil. Plans are underway to introduce the legislation necessary for India to ratify OPRC-HNS. Contingency arrangement for dealing with HNS spills are included in the NOS-DCP and revision of the HNS section is underway in 2025.

HNS incidents of relevance include:

In 2006, the LPG tanker vessel KEW BRIDGE, carrying a cargo of 8,798 tonnes of butane gas, ran aground near the Finolex Terminal, Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. The terminal was closed down by the authorities whilst the vessel was still aground, the surrounding villages were evacuated for a day, and a fishing ban was imposed. The vessel was lightened by pumping out the bunkers and removing 2,000 tonnes of butane gas to a second LPG tanker and safely refloated without spillage.

In 2021, the containership X-PRESS PEARL carrying HNS chemicals and a large volume of plastic pellets caught fire off the coast of Colombo, Sri Lanka. While the Indian coastline was not impacted, the Indian Coast Guard participated in the response to the fire onboard jointly with the Sri Lankan Navy and Air Force.

In 2025, off the Kerala Coast, two separate incidents involving the containerships MSC ELSA 3 and WAN HAI 503 led to HNS response and an extensive plastic pellets clean-up response.

CONVENTIONS

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

* not yet in force

REGIONAL AND BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka established the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) in 1982. SACEP, jointly with IMO, developed a "Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan" to facilitate international co-operation and mutual assistance in preparing and responding to a major oil pollution incident in the seas around the maritime states of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In 2018, India signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SACEP for cooperation on the response to oil and chemical pollution in the South Asian Seas region.

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