

PHILIPPINES

SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

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Marine Environmental Protection Command (MEPCOM) Philippine Coast Guard Coast Guard Base Farola Muelle de la Industria, Binondo Manila	Tel: +63 906 688 0506 Email: mepcom@coastguard.gov.ph
National Operations Center for Oil Pollution (NOCOP) Philippine Coast Guard 652 Railroad Drive Port Area 1000 Manila	Tel: +63 993 457 1547 Email: nocop@coastguard.gov.ph

COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY

Details are as for the spill notification point.

RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

For Tier 1 incidents, the responsible party is required to conduct clean-up using their own resources. For Tier 2 events, the relevant Coast Guard District activates its contingency plan, with the local Coast Guard commander serving as the local on-scene commander in coordination with NOCOP. Escalation to Tier 3 or incidents exceeding district capabilities triggers activation of the national plan and mobilisation of additional resources.

Shoreline response to oil and HNS incidents is coordinated by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), with significant involvement from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) for firefighting and rescue, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for environmental assessment and waste management, and the Department of Health (DOH) for public health and decontamination. The Oil Pollution Management Fund (OPMF), established by law and administered by the PCG, provides financial resources for clean-up and compensation, drawing from fines and penalties for pollution violations.

The PCG, under the Republic Act (RA) 9993, is the lead national authority for preventing and controlling oil and hazardous noxious substance (HNS) pollution in the country's territorial waters. The Marine Environmental Protection Command (MEPCOM), a unit of the PCG, is the point of contact for oil spill response operations and manages the National Operations Center for Oil Pollution (NOCOP), which supports incident management and mobilisation of resources. The NOCOP Commander serves as the national on-scene commander and can request assistance from other government, private and military sources.

A revised National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCOP) was promulgated in 2019. However, since the PRINCESS EMPRESS (2023) and TERRANOVA (2024) incidents, the Philippine government has been reviewing oil and HNS spill contingency arrangements. A draft National Contingency Plan for Oil and HNS Spills (NCP-OHNS) is currently being formulated but is yet to be promulgated.

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For a Tier 1 spill, the spiller is responsible for immediate clean-up efforts using their own equipment, with the supervision of the local Coast Guard Station establishing a scaled Incident Command System (ICS). For a Tier 2 spill, the Coast Guard District Command Oil Spill Contingency Plan comes into play; the District Coast Guard commander will act as the on-scene commander and will activate a regional Incident Management Team (IMT), integrating resources from Local Government Units (LGUs) and other agencies.

The National Contingency Plan will be activated in cases where the spill escalates to a Tier 3 situation or in cases where the incident requires resources outside the capability indicated in the Coast Guard District Command Oil Spill Contingency Plan. The PCG Commandant or Secretary of Transportation will activate the national ICS and Unified Command, with possible augmentation from the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) and international partners.

Oil impacting the coastline is cleaned by either personnel contracted by the spiller under the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard, or, in the absence of this, the Coast Guard Shoreline Response Teams themselves with assistance from the DENR. However, the PCG are not empowered to directly instruct the DENR.

The Oil Pollution Management Fund (OPMF), established under RA 9483, is available to finance national level spill response, equipment mobilisation and compensation for damages. Disbursement is managed by the PCG in coordination with the Department of Finance and MARINA, with penalties imposed on responsible parties as provided by law.

RESPONSE POLICY

Despite strategic government stockpiles located in key districts, due to the archipelagic nature of the Philippines, the policy for combating spills at sea is potentially limited by a lack of suitable resources if a spill occurs in a remote area. Any floating oil would be monitored and defensive booming would be used to protect any threatened coastal resources.

Dispersant spraying is an option but is limited by several criteria including the proximity of the spilled oil to sensitive resources. Authorisation must be gained from the director of the NOCOP to use dispersants and the products must first be accredited.

In addition, any response equipment provided by international partners or contractors requires accreditation by the Coast Guard prior to use on site. Waste disposal options are incorporated into the NCP.

EQUIPMENT

Government

The PCG, through MEPCOM, maintains strategically pre-positioned MARPOL equipment in key districts nationwide, including boom, skimmers, dispersant application systems, storage tanks, sorbents personal protective equipment (PPE) and chemical response kits.

Under Presidential Decree (PD) 602 and PD 979, the PCG may augment equipment by mobilising national stockpiles, requesting support from other agencies and utilising the ASEAN Oil Spill Response Action Plan (OSRAP) or bilateral response arrangements, such as Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) between the Philippines and Indonesia or Vietnam, and the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea Oil Spill Response Network between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. For Tier 3 incidents, international support through the IMO GI-SEA network may also be accessed.

Private

The 'Polluter' remains primarily responsible for mobilising their own equipment under their approved Oil Spill Contingency Plans (OSCPs) or HNS Spill Contingency Plans (HNS-SCPs). Oil companies, depots and refineries must maintain resources such as containment boom, skimmers and dispersant spraying systems.

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The Waterborne Industry Spill Equipment (WISE) Cooperative – established by Shell and Caltex, and other Oil Spill Response Organisations (OSROs) serve as critical industry partners, providing Tier 1 and Tier 2 equipment and personnel to supplement PCG-led operations. Equipment may also be deployed from refineries, port facilities or cooperative stockpiles located in high-risk areas such as Batangas, Palawan, Cebu and Davao.

PREVIOUS SPILL EXPERIENCE

Over the years, the Philippines has experienced several major oil pollution incidents. The SOLAR 1 (2006) sank in rough seas with a full cargo of heavy fuel oil (~ 2,000 MT) in the Guimaras Straits. PCG led the response and was assisted by Petron Corporation (the charterer of the vessel). At-sea response focused on the application of chemical dispersants using aerial dispersant spraying methods and spray arms mounted on tugs and PCG patrol vessels. The incident created relatively little shoreline contamination but had a substantial impact on subsistence fishing. The decision was taken to remove oil remaining in the sunken wreck which was lying at a depth of some 600 metres, but at a location sufficiently close to coastlines to create a significant potential threat.

The tanker PRINCESS EMPRESS (2023) sank approximately 15 km northeast of the island of Mindoro at a depth of ~ 400 metres laden with 825 MT of heavy fuel oil. An unknown quantity of oil was immediately released after the sinking that impacted multiple administrative regions, the coastline of Mindoro (MIMAROPA) and Caluya (Western Visayas), with significant oiling of the island of Semirara. PCG led the response with the shipowner assisting with the mobilisation of local OSROs, Malayan Towage and Salvage Corporation (MTSC) and Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc. (HSSSI), undertaking at-sea and shoreline response respectively.

Most recently, the tanker TERRANOVA (2024) sank at approximately 30 metres depth in Manila Bay, approximately 7 kilometres off the coast of Limay, Bataan, laden with 1,469 MT of heavy fuel oil. Following the sinking, sheen was witnessed on the surface of the water, however minimal shoreline impacts were noted. At-sea response typically comprised containment and recovery operations and dispersant spraying by the PCG and local OSROs HSSSI and MTSC.

The PRINCESS EMPRESS and TERRANOVA incidents had substantial impacts on subsistence fishing with a significant number of fisheries claims submitted to the vessel insurer and the IOPC Funds.

HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

The Philippines is currently in the process of updating their National Contingency Plan (NCP) to include HNS response and this document will be called the National Contingency Plan for Oil and HNS Spill (NCP-OHNS). The Philippines has established a multi-agency framework for responding to HNS incidents both at sea and on the shoreline. The PCG serves as the lead agency for HNS spill response, coordinating containment and mitigation efforts in marine and coastal areas.

For shoreline incidents, the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) is actively involved, providing firefighting and rescue support, especially when flammable or toxic substances are present. Local Government Units (LGUs), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Health (DOH) and other specialised agencies contribute expertise in environmental assessment, waste management and public health.

While the Philippines maintains essential equipment such as personal protective equipment (PPE), detection devices, and laboratory facilities, resources remain limited for large-scale HNS events. The Philippines has previously experienced HNS incidents, notably the barge BILLY STAR, which sank in Batangas Bay with 1,270 MT of sulphuric acid onboard, and the ferry, PRINCESS OF THE STARS, which sank in 2008 with heavy loss of life and drums of endosulphate and calcium hypochlorite onboard.

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CONVENTIONS

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

* not yet in force

REGIONAL AND BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The ASEAN-OSRAP (Association of South East Asian Nations Oil Spill Response Action Plan) with the other ASEAN countries and with contribution from Japan.

The Sulu-Sulawesi Sea Oil Spill Response Network, with Indonesia and Malaysia.

Memorandum of Agreement on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response (with Indonesia).

Memorandum of Agreement on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response (with Vietnam).

ASEAN Joint MOU on Oil Spill Preparedness and Response.

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