

SRI LANKA

SPILL NOTIFICATION POINT

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COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY

Contact details are the same as for the spill notification point.

RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

The National Contingency Plan, initially prepared by the Marine Pollution Prevention Authority (MPPA) in 1995 and revised in 1998 and 1999, received Cabinet approval in 2000. It has been amended since and is now known as the National Oil and HNS Spill Contingency Plan (NOHSCP), as of 2024.

The MPPA, now known as the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), is responsible for the prevention, control, monitoring, mitigation and management of pollution in Sri Lankan waters, as well as the restoration of damaged environments, under the Marine Pollution Prevention Act No. 35 of 2008.

MEPA activates the NOHSCP and takes overall command, especially in larger spills at sea or when significant quantities of oil escape port confines. Small spills (less than 100 tonnes) are managed by the Sri Lankan Port Authority, with MEPA in a monitoring role.

An Advisory Committee, comprising local oil industry representatives and government bodies, can be formed if necessary to support the On-Scene Commander appointed by MEPA. For large spills, additional support may be sought from the spiller or neighbouring countries.

There are three tiers of spill response:

- **Tier I (0 – 50 tonnes):** Local authority (e.g., port authority) facilitates clean-up.
- **Tier II (50 – 100 tonnes):** Activation of NOHSCP, with potential industry involvement in addition to the local authority.
- **Tier III (>100 tonnes):** International assistance is required, working with local and national authorities for clean-up.

RESPONSE POLICY

Mechanical recovery techniques are prioritised for tackling oil on water, with dispersants considered only after a Net Environmental Benefit Analysis (NEBA) and authorisation by MEPA.

Most mechanical clean-up equipment is limited to use within ports or sheltered waters. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) owns equipment to handle spills from its offshore Single Buoy Mooring (SBM) off Colombo.

Agencies with oil spill response capabilities, such as the Sri Lankan Navy, Coast Guard, CPC, Port Authority or other agencies, are authorised to act during Tier II or III incidents. MEPA has overall authority over operations and authorises specific actions.

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EQUIPMENT

Government & Private

Limited resources for responding to spills within ports or sheltered waters are held by the Port Authority in Colombo. The CPC has containment and recovery equipment, including oil storage barges, and both the Port Authority and CPC have vessel-mounted offshore dispersant spraying capabilities.

Additional equipment includes a small number of backpack dispersant sprayers for shoreline use. Limited stocks of dispersant are held by the private Colombo Dockyard Ltd. The Sri Lanka Coast Guard and MEPA store oil spill response equipment at the Dikowita Fisheries Harbour.

MEPA can call upon various resource agencies for non-specialised support. The NOHSCP outlines the involvement of multiple departments and agencies in an incident and their respective roles. In the event of a major spill, assistance from other countries is anticipated.

PREVIOUS SPILL EXPERIENCE

The container ship X-PRESS PEARL (2021) suffered a leak of nitric acid, which resulted in a catastrophic fire that incinerated a large number of the containers on board and eventually caused the ship to sink. The ship was anchored at the Colombo anchorage, on the west coast of Sri Lanka. It is understood that at the time of the fire, X-PRESS PEARL was carrying 1,486 containers, 81 of which were declared as dangerous goods. In addition, it was carrying 255m³ of Very Low Sulphur Heavy Fuel Oil (VLSFO) and approximately 50m³ of Marine Gas Oil (MGO). The incident resulted in multiple years of shoreline clean-up of spilled plastic pellets.

The VLCC NEW DIAMOND (2020) caught fire approximately 35NM east of Sangamankanda Point, Sri Lanka. The vessel was fully laden, carrying 277,144 MT of Kuwait Export Crude Oil, 1,400 MT VLSFO and 120 MT LSMGO. No shoreline impact was reported.

The KOMSOMOLETS AZERBAYDZHANA (1994) reportedly spilled 100 tonnes of fuel oil after grounding outside Galle harbour. No oil impacted the coastline.

HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS)

The MEPA is the responsible authority for dealing with spills of HNS. The current National Contingency Plan also includes consideration of HNS. Sri Lanka is in discussions with other South Asian countries about developing an MoU for HNS spills.

In 2009, the Sri Lankan Navy responded to an incident involving the chemical tanker GRANBA which reported a leak of its cargo of sulfuric acid. The vessel sank off Sri Lanka's east coast in 3,800 metres of water.

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

Sri Lanka is a member of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) with Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and the Maldives (established by UNEP). A Regional Joint Contingency Plan has been developed by SACEP that outlines the cooperation and help offered by the other members states in the region. Meetings are held annually to provide country updates, discuss the contingency plan, outline any lessons learned from incidents and plan any joint exercises.

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