

COUNTRY PROFILES: A SUMMARY OF OIL SPILL RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS AND RESOURCES WORLDWIDE

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ABSTRACT: *To assist shipowners comply with their requirements under the international conventions International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) has produced a series of Country Profiles. These documents are intended to provide a greater overall understanding of oil spill response and state of preparedness nationally, and to promote cooperation between shipowners and the various government and private bodies involved in such matters. The Profiles, available to all via the Internet (at www.itopf.com/country_profiles), cover approximately 160 maritime nations and allow users to obtain a quick snapshot of national response arrangements.*

Background

A primary objective of the IMO International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Cooperation, 1990 (OPRC Convention) is to encourage maritime nations to develop and maintain an adequate system to deal with oil pollution emergencies. Within this system, the OPRC Convention requires contracting parties to have in place a national operational contact point and a competent national authority with responsibility for preparedness and response. Each country should prepare a national contingency plan and maintain a minimum level of pre-positioned oil spill combating equipment commensurate with the risk involved.

Notwithstanding these requirements, the level of resources available and the general ability to respond varies greatly from country to country, depending upon many factors including the presence of an oil industry and economic prosperity.

To fulfill the requirements for pre-positioned equipment, many countries rely on the tiered response approach whereby a number of levels of equipment and expertise are maintained and called upon as required. Therefore, a local facility such as a refinery or port will maintain a Tier 1 capability allowing them to adequately respond to small localised spills often associated with routine ship operations such as loading, discharging and bunkering. These Tier 1 resources would then be supplemented by a Tier 2 capability to cater for larger incidents such as a shipping accident in a port or port approaches. The nature of the Tier 2 response would depend on local circumstances but would generally involve the pooling of several Tier 1 capabilities and

national government resources. For very large spills, a number of internationally available Tier 3 capabilities have been established in strategic locations by oil companies.

In addition to the requirements on a state, the OPRC Convention also requires ships, offshore platforms, ports and oil terminals to have oil pollution emergency plans. The requirement for shipboard plans has been implemented through an amendment, Regulation 26, to Annex I of the MARPOL 73/78 Convention whereby oil tankers over 150 GT and all other ships of 400 GT and above are required to carry an approved plan on board. The plan must include a list of authorities or persons to be contacted in the event of an oil pollution incident, as well as details for coordinating shipboard activities in conjunction with the designated national and local authorities.

In many countries, however, the owner of a ship causing an oil spill is not required to organise the clean up or to procure any resources. Here, an agency of government will assume the responsibility for organising and controlling the response operation. This is not the case in a number of countries, including the U.S., Canada and Japan where the owner is required to utilise private contractors under the supervision of a government agency. Between the two extremes of government-organised and spiller-organised response and clean up there are many intermediate positions tied to the tiered response approach.

Country Profiles

To assist shipowners comply with their requirements under the international Conventions, and to provide an overall understanding of national arrangements, ITOPF has produced a series of Country Profiles. These documents summarise the spill response in approximately 160 maritime nations under seven main headings.

Spill Notification Point. Where appropriate, contact details are provided for the government authority officially designated as the agency or administrative body within the coastal state for the receipt and processing of reports of oil spill incidents. Details of coastal radio stations and individual port contacts are generally not included.

Competent National Authority. This is the government authority within the coastal state which, it is understood, has overall (lead) responsibility for establishing arrangements to deal with oil spills from ships and to which routine requests for advice or information should be directed. This

information is provided in order, for example, to facilitate information exchange and cooperation *before* an incident in order to aid the preparation of a contingency plan.

Response Arrangements. This section endeavours to describe briefly the arrangements within the particular country for responding to an oil spill incident. The organisational arrangements are described within the context of the national contingency plan, if one exists, with distinctions drawn as appropriate for response to spills at sea, within ports or other specific locations, and for oil that reaches shorelines.

Response Policy. This section details the basic spill response policy of a country and its attitudes towards, for example, the use of chemical dispersants (Figure 1); containment and collection of oil at sea; protection of sensitive resources; and shoreline cleanup. Whilst this is useful, experience shows that the circumstances of an actual spill can cause a country to depart from its stated response policy.

Equipment. A general indication is given of the types and amounts of oil spill clean-up equipment and materials available from both government agencies and private companies within the country. This includes internationally available oil industry spill response resources (Figure 2.)

Previous Spill Experience. A broad and brief overview is provided of the response to, and damage caused by, previous oil spills in each country. This section is intended to give an indication of the approach which may be followed in the event of a future spill in that country and the particular problems that may be encountered.

Conventions. The country's ratification or otherwise of the most relevant International Maritime Organization (IMO) Conventions in the areas of pollution prevention, oil spill response and compensation is indicated (Figure 3.).

Regional and Bilateral Agreements. The relevant regional and bilateral agreements of which the country is a member are listed. This includes freestanding and UNEP Regional Seas Conventions (Figure 4.).

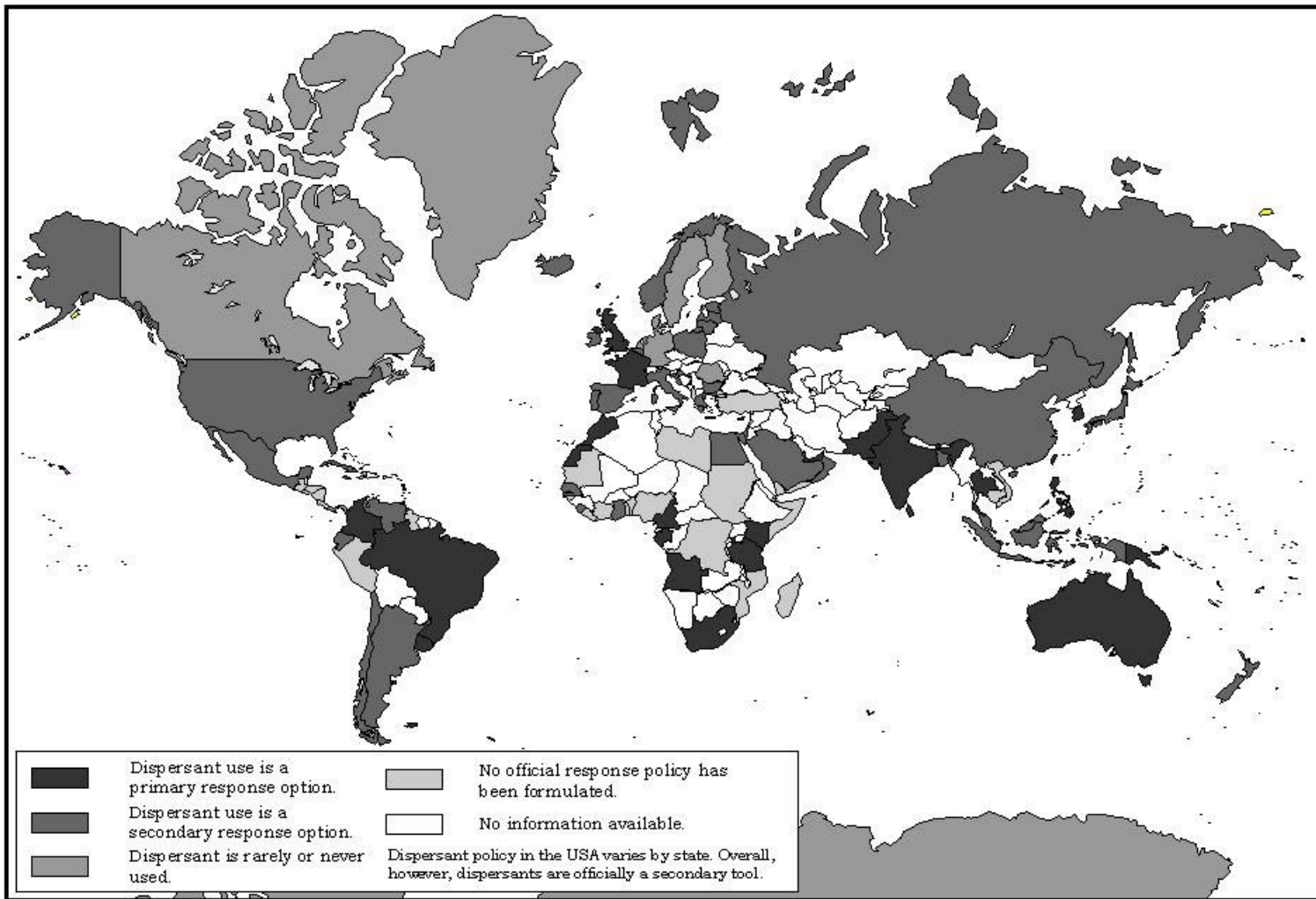


Figure 1. Global dispersant usage policies

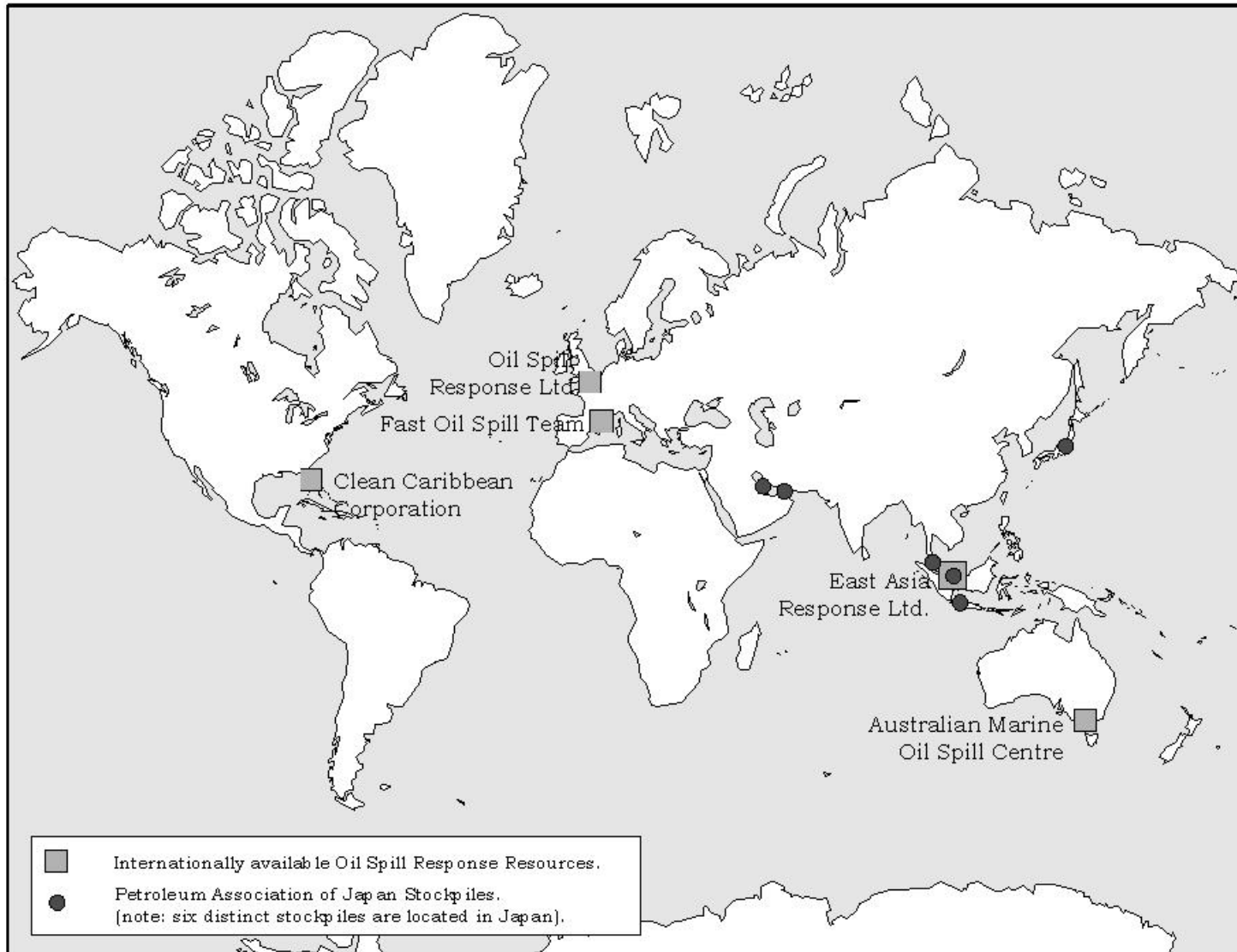


Figure 2. Internationally available oil industry spill response resources

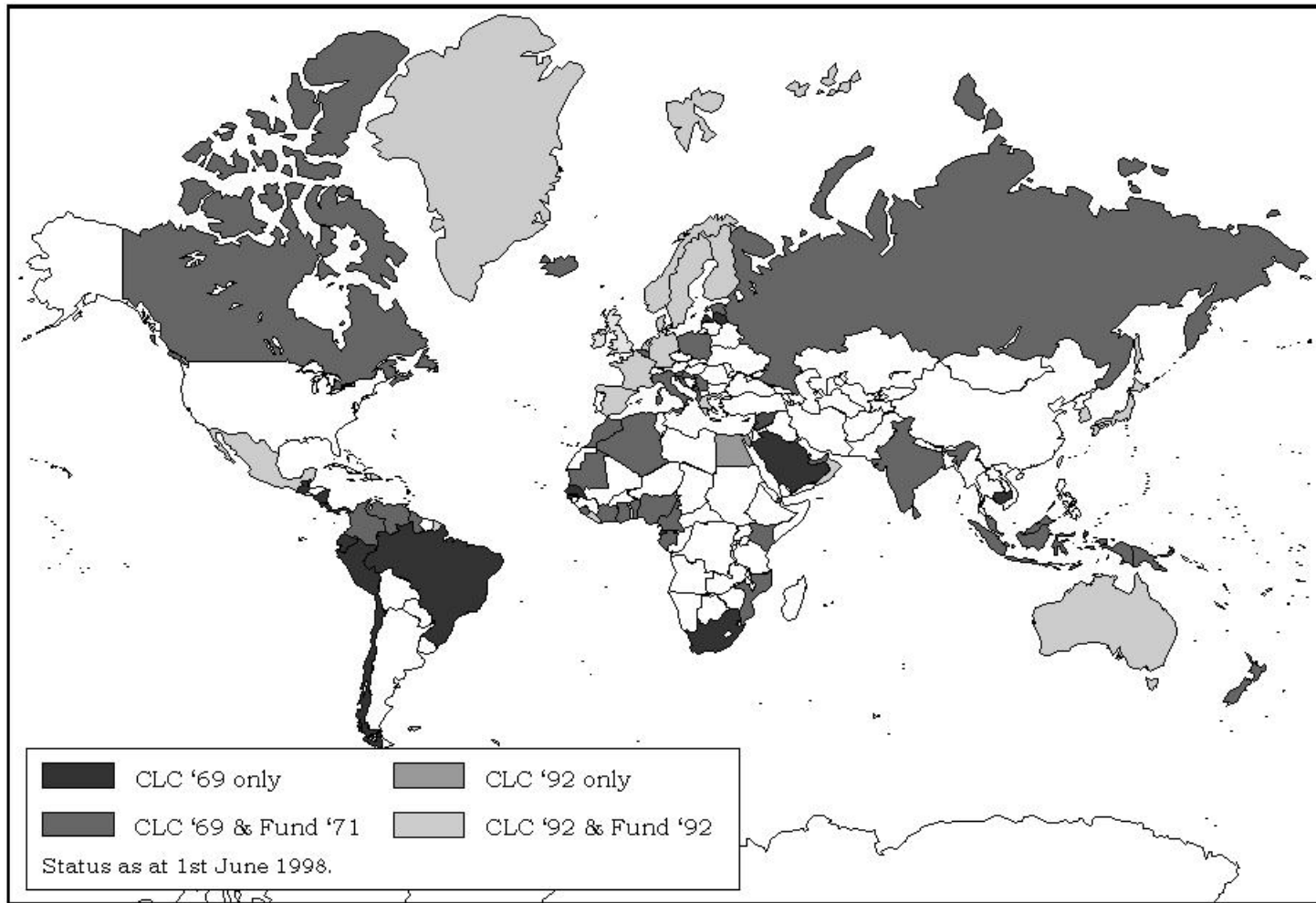


Figure 3. Status of Civil Liability and Fund Conventions

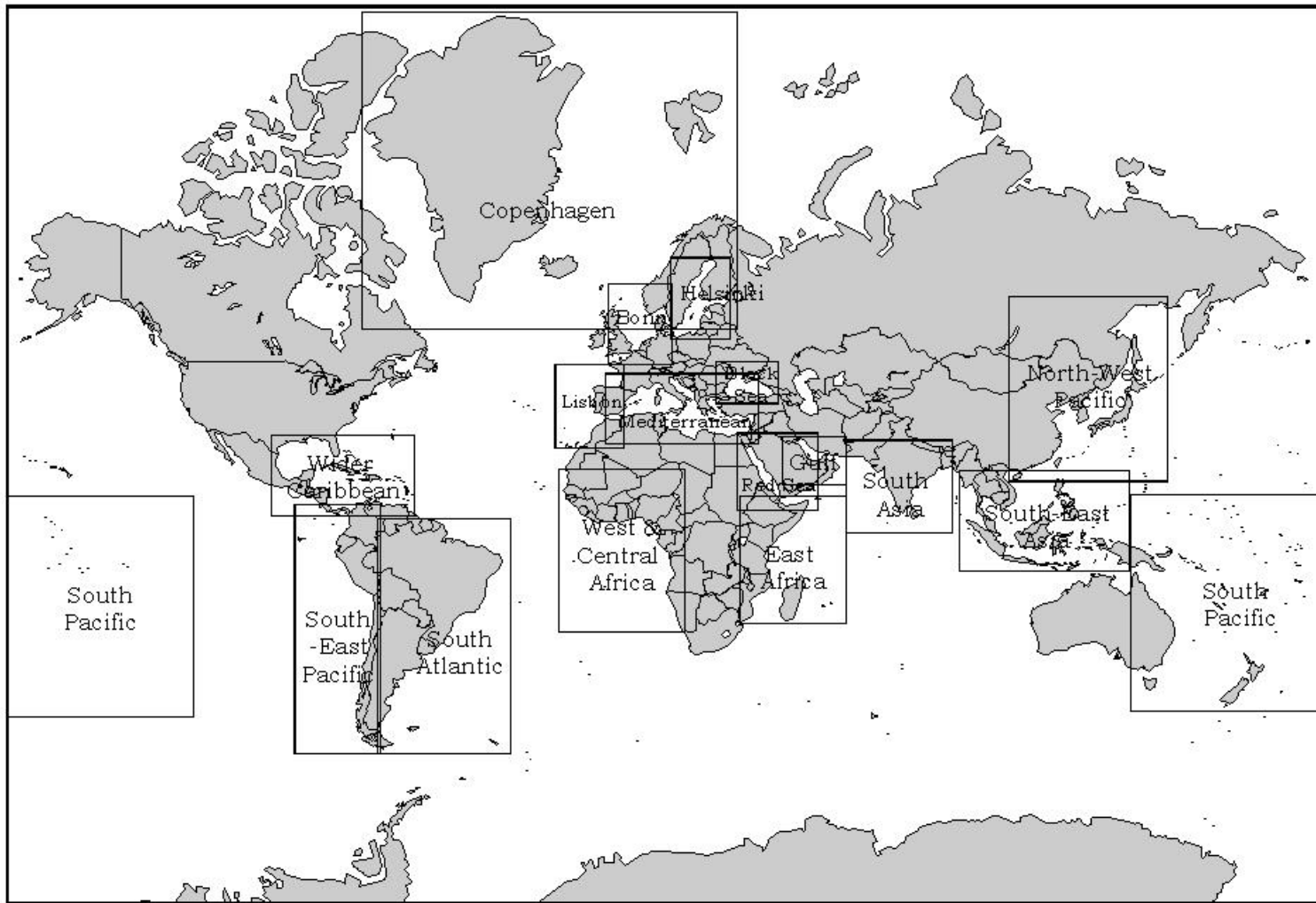


Figure 4. Some regional oil spill agreements

Internet Access

While primarily prepared to assist shipowners, the Country Profiles have proven to be of value to a wide variety of organisations involved in the production, transport or handling of oil products, or in the preparation for and response to oil spills. In order to make the Country Profiles widely available to all potential users, they are freely available on the Internet, subject to certain terms and conditions, at www.itopf.com/country_profiles, as part of the ITOPF website. They are presented using a standard Adobe Acrobat format to facilitate access by all Internet users regardless of the type of hardware or browser. In this way, the Profiles can be printed or incorporated into contingency plans and other documents, but it is not possible to alter either their text or appearance. Both the complete set of Profiles and a number of small groups, selected by geographic area or date of last update, are available.

Updating

The Profiles are updated in two ways. New information is added on an ongoing basis as it is received, either from published sources or gathered through ITOPF attendance at conferences, spills or on advisory assignments. The Convention tables are updated every month as new information becomes available on the IMO's website. In

addition, a structured and active programme of updating is in place, with the intention of thoroughly reviewing each Profile once every two years with the cooperation of governments. Updating is being carried out on a rolling basis region by region, starting with the Caribbean, Middle East and South East Asia. Alterations to the Profiles are uploaded onto the website once every month.

Biography

Tim Wadsworth has a degree in Materials Engineering and Design. He joined ITOPF in 1991 and is presently a Technical Support Coordinator.

References

1. MARPOL 73/78. 1991. Consolidated Edition, International Maritime Organization.
2. OPRC Convention. 1991. International Maritime Organization.
3. International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Ltd. 1996. An Assessment of the Risk of Oil Spills and the State of Preparedness in 13 UNEP Regional Seas Areas.
4. International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Ltd., 1998. Status of Civil Liability and Fund Conventions.