ITOPF R&D Award 2020 to fund research into the measurement and effects of toxic substances on deep-sea ecosystems

We are pleased to announce that the beneficiary of the 9th annual ITOPF R&D Award is BAUPRE (Biological Assessment Under Hydrostatic Pressure), a project led by Orphy (a research unit in physiology from the University of Western Brittany, France), in partnership with Cedre and TOTAL SA.

This project is designed to improve the methodology used by laboratories to simulate the effect of hydrostatic pressure. Specifically, the project will investigate how pressure influences microbial activity and toxicity of oil and chemicals on deep-sea ecosystems. The researchers will use the scenario of a deep-sea leakage of fuel oil to measure the rate of biodegradation of the fuel oil at different pressures by simulating depths of up to 1500m. In addition, the researchers will measure the toxic effect of pressure on bacterial strains using reference toxins. The outcome of this research should provide data on the effect of hydrostatic pressure on the survivability, growth, and activity of bacteria responsible for biodegradation of pollutants at depth e.g. from sunken vessels or blow-outs.

The project will take 12 months and builds on preliminary results obtained by an earlier EU-funded project called BIOPADE.

ITOPF's Managing Director, Dr. Karen Purnell, said “This is an original and promising project using cutting-edge methodology. Its findings should pave the way to providing better quality biological data, more quickly, in the event of a spill of oil or HNS from a vessel sinking at depth.”

Since the ITOPF R&D Award was set up in 2011, £400,000 has already been distributed to eight separate R&D projects worldwide on behalf of ITOPF's shipowners and their P&I insurers.

From 2021, the amount of the Award will increase from £50,000 to £75,000. This will be used to support a combination of PhD and short-term projects which have the potential to lead to improvements in spill preparation and response, as well as new techniques for monitoring and restoring environmental resources.

Information on the Award, including updates on previous award winners, can be found on our website: <http://www.itopf.org/in-action/r-d-award/>. The deadline for applications for the 2021 ITOPF R&D Award is 30th November 2020. Potential candidates should not hesitate to contact us if they have any questions regarding the Award by emailing rdaward@itopf.org.

**Notes on ITOPF**

1. Established in 1968, ITOPF is maintained by the world’s shipowners and their insurers on a not-for-profit basis to promote effective response to spills of oil, chemicals and other substances in the marine environment.

2. ITOPF was originally known as the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation, but dropped the full version of its name in 2018.

3. ITOPF's Membership currently comprises over 8,000 owners and bareboat charterers of approximately 13,900 tank vessels with a total gross tonnage of around 445 million GT. The organisation also benefits from the participation of over 840 million GT of non-tanker tonnage owned and operated by its Associates.

4. ITOPF's priority service is responding to accidental ship-source spills and the organisation's team of highly experienced technical staff are at constant readiness to travel anywhere in the world at a few hours’ notice. ITOPF staff have attended on-site at over 800 incidents around the world,

giving the organisation unparalleled practical experience of the realities of combating marine spills.

ITOPF also:

* assesses the damage caused by spills to the environment and economic resources;
* provides advice on the technical merits of claims for compensation;
* conducts contingency planning, advisory and training assignments;
* is a primary source of information on ship-source spills through its technical publications, films and website ([www.itopf.org](http://www.itopf.org)).

5. For further information contact:

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