

Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers

Overview

- Topic** National Plan Policy – Air Attack Supervisors – Air Observers
- Purpose** **Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers**
This Policy describes the arrangements for the provision of national Air Attack Supervisors and national Aerial Observers in the event of a major marine oil pollution incident.
- Definitions** The following definitions relate to terms used specifically in this document.
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| AFAC | Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority Council |
| AMOSC | Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre |
| AMSA | Australian Maritime Safety Authority |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| National Plan | National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies |
| NT | Northern Territory |
- Scope** This policy is consistent with the requirements of the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies. This policy sets out AMSA's and the State/NT jurisdictional responsibilities and provides a description of the Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers.
- This policy relates to the provision of the national Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers capability. This policy outlines the following:
- Sourcing of Competency Based Training Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers for existing State/NT capabilities.
 - Jurisdictional responsibilities for Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers provision.
 - Management and maintenance of the Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers.

Sourcing of Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers

The Air Attack Supervisors and the Aerial Observers roles carry a high level of risk and requires significant and ongoing training for skills maintenance. The Air Attack Supervisors role in particular carries significant operational risks if not practiced regularly.

Training of pollution-specific Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers is resource intensive and of questionable value to some jurisdictions. Given the low frequency of pollution events requiring the application of aerial dispersants it is apparent that maintaining a pollution-specific Air Attack Supervisors capability is not an effective use of limited resources if an alternative is available. Whilst more regularly activated, the National Plan Aerial Observers capability could also be challenged on a value for money versus frequency of activation basis.

Over the last decade Australia has invested heavily in an aerial fire-fighting capability. The adoption of widespread aerial observation and retardant application has many similarities to the capabilities required for oil spill response. This national resource also has the additional benefit of providing personnel who are well trained and practiced in the Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers roles. As a result of this there is an existing core of trained and practiced personnel in each State/NT that could be utilised to undertake these roles in a marine pollution event.

Given the Units of Competency adopted by National Council for Fire and Emergency Services for Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers mirror those previously identified by the National Plan, the only training necessary to enable these personnel to operate in a marine pollution context is AMSA's online 'Oil on Water' course.

Jurisdictional responsibilities for Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers provision

Each State/NT has agreed to engage with their whole of Government Emergency Arrangements to enhance the National Capability through the provision of personnel capable of undertaking Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers functions.

As each State/NT may have slightly different skill sets required to fulfil the roles of Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers in their jurisdiction, it is a requirement of each State/NT supplying personnel to other jurisdictional incidents to undertake a risk assessment before deployment.

Utilising the existing State/NT arrangements allows the National Plan to access an existing pool of suitably trained and practiced personnel for these specific roles.

Through the National Plan MoU arrangement with AMOSC, there is additional access to industry personnel trained in the Aerial Observer role. New South Wales also maintains an Aerial Observer capability.

Management and maintenance of the Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers

Skill Sets

Units of competency under the Australian Quality Training Framework have been identified by National Council for Fire and Emergency Services for each of the roles. Please refer to their web site for qualifications.

Personnel identified for each role are required to have all units of competency for that role as well as having undertaken agreed oil on water training program. Skills maintenance will be the responsibility of the owning agency with the providing State/NT to audit oil on water training as appropriate.

Air Attack Supervisor

Air Attack Supervisors are responsible for the safe and efficient coordination of aerial dispersant application and tactical aircraft activity in support of the incident. The Air Attack Supervisors is responsible for ensuring safety standards are maintained at all times; for the provision of specialist aviation advice at the incident; and for collaborating in the preparation of Air Operations section of the Incident Action Plan (IAP).

Aerial Observer

Aerial Observers are responsible for collecting and obtaining accurate intelligence information of the oil spill activity and dispersant application progress from an aircraft. The Air Observer maintains close communication with all members of the Aircraft Operations Unit.

Aerial Observer Technical

Aerial Observers Technical are responsible for conducting reconnaissance flights of location of oil in water and on shorelines.

National Response Team Status

It is not envisaged that the pool will be managed as National Response Team personnel but rather that, when needed, suitably qualified personnel are sourced by a request from the State/NT chair either in response to a State/NT incident or as part of a National Plan request for assistance.

Deployment

Deployment of Air Attack Supervisors and Aerial Observers will occur in accordance with the deployment of the National Response Team Guidance.

PPE Requirements

Each State/NT may have differing requirements of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Air Attack Supervisors and Air Observer personnel. The responsibility of appropriate PPE rests with the requesting jurisdiction.