

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENTIFIC ISSUES

Dispersant Efficacy Testing

A testing program of National Plan dispersants was undertaken to assess the efficiency of existing dispersant stocks in respect to shelf life. The program included sampling all stockpiles of dispersant that were over five years old. The testing program also included samples from the AMOSC stockpile in Geelong.

The Cawthron Institute in New Zealand carried out the testing. Results showed that all National Plan dispersants except three samples (one Ardrex and two BP A-B) meet the efficacy requirements. On the basis of the results AMSA intends to resample and test the suspect samples. This will be carried out during 2003-2004.

Oil Spill Response Atlas

The Oil Spill Response Atlas (OSRA) provides vital environmental, biological and logistical information to marine spill responders in a useful and effective format to enable a fast and efficient response to oil and chemical spills in the marine environment.

The National Plan allocated \$200,000 for the 2002-2003 financial year, as part of the continuation of the OSRA program. This funding was allocated to the States/NT to update and maintain existing data. Funding was also distributed to acquire new spatial datasets and imagery.

The Atlas has been used extensively in incidents and exercises since its inception in December 1999 and has proven to be a robust and effective decision support system.

Oil Spill Trajectory Modelling

The tracking of oil spills likely to impact the shoreline is of prime importance in response planning. Computer models are used to simulate and predict the movement of oil. The information provided is used to support response decision making.

Since the acquisition of the Oil Spill Trajectory Modelling (OSTM) System, AMSA has provided State/NT spill response personnel with modelling trajectories for incidents and exercises.

During the reporting period AMSA, with the assistance of Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) conducted a two-day exercise in Moreton Bay to test the effectiveness of the OSTM System. The OSTM model predictions were compared to the changing geographic positions of drifting objects, including satellite-tracking buoys deployed at sea. The timing and drift locations, wind and weather were closely monitored during the exercise.

A detailed report on the Moreton Bay exercise will be finalised early in the new financial year. The outcomes of this exercise will provide National Plan stakeholders with a better understanding of the effectiveness of OSTM and help direct any improvements, refinements, updates or future developments of the system and underlying data.

Environment and Scientific Coordinators (ESC) Workshop 2003

The National Plan, with assistance from Environment Australia, funded the 12th Environment and Scientific Coordinators (ESC) Workshop in Port Stephens, New South Wales in March 2003.

Thirty participants from around Australia attended the Workshop including 4 industry representatives and 2 international participants from New Zealand and Sweden.

The focus of this workshop was on the practical aspects of ESC duties and involved a number of field activities in relation to hypothetical spill scenarios and interactive sessions. Presentations were provided during the workshop on oil spill dispersants, foreshore assessment, chemical spill response, environmental priority setting, oiled wildlife and National Plan decision support systems.

The Workshop proceedings can be found on the AMSA web site at: www.amsa.gov.au/me/natplan/TOOLBOX/ESCWSP.htm