

Role of Technical Advisors

Reference:
NP-POL-001

Purpose This policy describes the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Advisors within the National Plan Incident Management System.

Scope This policy is consistent with the arrangements of the National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies.

Background Recommendation 4 of *Exercise Sea Dragon* recommended that the Incident Management Team for major marine oil spills be supported by a small panel of expert observers to provide incident management and specialist advice and support. The intent of the recommendation was to improve the decision making of key personnel through the use of independent advisors unencumbered by operational management or decision making responsibilities.

The use of Technical Advisors can have particular benefits for response operations, in particular:

- Mentoring and supporting incident management team personnel who perform the role on an infrequent basis; and
- Improving operational decision making.

The National Plan Incident Management System is derived from the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) which already provides for the role of advisors and specialists within the organisational structure. Technical Advisors as described within this policy would form part of this structure.

Role of Technical Advisors Technical Advisors operate in support of response operations across three broad areas of activity:

- Independent analysis, including:
 - Challenging planning assumptions and analysis
 - Assessing the strength of operational intelligence
 - Provide alternative response options
 - Assess the potential for surprise
- Mentoring, including:
 - Advising key response personnel
 - Identifying gaps
- Specialist advice, such as:
 - Environmental
 - Chemical behaviour
 - Dispersants

Technical Advisors have an **advisory** role only. They do not have any decision making or management responsibilities within the Incident Management Team. The only direct relationship will be to the officer(s) to whom they are providing the advice.

While Technical Advisors may be tasked to review response operations, this review function will be conducted for the Incident Controller only. Should a broader review be required by the Marine Pollution Controller or equivalent, then this should be a discrete function, separate from the incident management team and structure and not implemented as an Advisor role.

National Plan National Response Team Policy

Considerations for implementation

In considering the inclusion of Technical Advisors within the Incident Management Team, the following issues should be considered:

Issues	Description
Expertise	Advisors should have a strong understanding of the operating environment within which they will be working. If undertaking an evaluation task, then consideration should be given to their analytical skills. If undertaking a mentoring task, then inter-personal skills will be an important skills set.
Trust	The appointed Advisors effectiveness will be dependent on their ability to build rapport, trust and credibility within the Incident Management Team. Consideration should be given to the individual's ability to develop this rapport, without which their effectiveness will be limited.
Positional Authority	The Incident Controller should sanction the Advisors role within the Incident Management Team and clearly communicate that role within the response organisation.
Relative independence	Strict independence is not necessary, however the Advisors should have sufficient freedom of action to evaluate the situation and provide advice freely. The working relationship between the Advisors and the Incident Management Team should be clearly defined at activation.
Flexibility	The Incident Management Team should consider the Advisors role flexibly, in that they can be employed in a range of different settings (strategic and tactical).

Activation

Technical Advisors can be sourced from within their own emergency management arrangements, or through the National Response Team or AMOSC Core Group.

Requests for Advisors from the NRT or AMOSC Core Group should be made in accordance with the National Plan Guidance on Accessing National Plan Support Arrangements