

APPENDIX TO INCIDENT ACTION PLAN – CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS FOR CLEANUP OF TARBALLS AND MINOR OILING ON ASHMORE REEF AND ISLANDS AND CARTIER ISLAND

SITUATION

7 day forecast modelling indicates that oiling may occur on Ashmore Reef/Islands. Modelling indicates that Cartier Island is unlikely to be effected. Beyond forty-eight hours there are significant margins of error in the modelling predictions. First signs of impact would be noticeable from 28 August 2009.

Surveillance indicates that oil movement is still to the North-east. No oil has been sighted in the direction of Ashmore Reef. However based on modelling predictions a level of preparedness will be maintained.

It is expected that impacts would be in the form of tarballs in low quantities but with repeated impacts (at low intensity) over a period of days to weeks. Tarballs have low toxicity and would strand along the high tide mark on the islands.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION

The rig is about 57 and 80 nautical miles from Cartier Island Marine Reserve and Ashmore Reef National Nature Reserve respectively. Cartier contains one unvegetated sand cay and a mature reef flat with two shallow pools immediately to the north-east of the cay. Ashmore contains two extensive lagoons, mobile channelled carbonate sand flats, shifting sand cays, an extensive reef flat and three vegetated islands, East, Middle and West Islands. The two lagoons have four northern entrances and extensive coral growth. The beaches around each of the three islands at Ashmore are coral rubble. Particle size is generally gravel to pebble in size.

Ashmore and Cartier reserves are important staging points for migratory shorebirds and support large breeding populations of seabirds. Seabirds nest at the reserves throughout the year with some species currently nesting. Individuals from these species dive to shallow depths, foraging throughout the region. Flocks of migratory shorebirds gather at Ashmore and Cartier between October and November.

Significant populations of three marine turtle species feed in the region year round. Ashmore provides critical nesting habitat for the Green turtles whose nesting activity occurs throughout the year peaking around January. Ashmore is also well known for its diversity of seasnakes, however numbers of observations have declined significantly over recent years.

ASSETS

**Note these reflect current and planned assets as provided by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service at Ashmore Reef only. There are no current assets available at Cartier Island. Should the spill reach Cartier, additional arrangements will need to be made.*

Current Assignment – Ashmore Reef lagoon

ACV Corio Bay

6 crew available for oil spill clean-up
No clean-up equipment available

Planned Assignment

ACV Hervey Bay (on scene 11/09/09, depart scene 16/09/09)
Ashmore Guardian (on scene 15/09/09) – based in Ashmore Reef lagoon
6 crew available for clean-up operations

CLEAN-UP STRATEGY

For period that ACV Corio Bay is on scene:

Planning assumptions:

- a) ACV Corio Bay has no capacity to undertake clean-up operations however officers will be able to undertake routine observations on islands to detect presence of any oil or residue. Limitations include clean-up equipment and storage capacity.
 - b) Should additional cleanup resources be required during this period, DEWHA and AMSA will liaise with PTTEP to ensure resources (personnel and equipment) are directed to Ashmore and/or Cartier as soon as possible.
1. Where possible, daily survey of beaches on all Ashmore Islands to determine if oiling has occurred in previous 24 hour period.
 2. If oiling is identified, report to DEHWA via email to Chantal Simakoff-Ellims (Chantal.simakoff-ellims@environment.gov.au). Report should include information listed at Attachment A plus photos. If oiling identified, DEWHA to discuss with AMSA Incident Controller.
 3. AMSA Incident Controller and DEWHA to convene and discuss whether oiling is sufficient to justify mobilising additional resources to the scene.
 4. ACV Corio Bay crew to attempt clean-up of minor oiling with local resources following discussions with AMSA Incident Controller and DEWHA.

For period from ACV Hervey Bay, then Ashmore Guardian arrival on-scene:

Planning assumptions:

- a) ACV and Ashmore Guardian will be equipped for basic shoreline clean-up operations.
 - b) Should additional cleanup resources be required during this period, DEWHA and AMSA will liaise with PTTEP to ensure resources (personnel and equipment) are directed to Ashmore and/or Cartier as soon as possible.
1. Daily survey of beaches on all Ashmore Islands to determine if oiling has occurred in previous 24 hour period.
 2. If oiling is identified, report to DEHWA via email to Chantal Simakoff-Ellims (Chantal.simakoff-ellims@environment.gov.au). Report should include information listed at Attachment A plus photos.
 3. DEWHA and AMSA Incident Controller to discuss oiling, and provide advice to Customs officer on how/when clean up should commence.

4. Recovery of oiling if situation warrants. Recovery will be via:
 - a. Use of rakes to shift oil into rows.
 - b. Use of shovels to lift recovered oil into sand bags.
 - c. Care should be taken to minimise sediment removal. If percentage recovered oil to sediment is less than 50% advice should be obtained from AMSA and DEWHA before proceeding further.
5. Recovered oil is to be stored on Ashmore Guardian for return to mainland. AMSA and DEWHA to coordinate disposal on arrival.
6. Care should be taken to minimise transferral of oil from scene to vessels via Boots and Clothing. Officers should utilise the personal protective equipment provided by AMSA.

OILEDWILDLIFE

If oiled wildlife are found, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Note the location the animal was found and the general condition of the animal – how much oil is on it, if movement appears laboured etc.
2. Identify the animal to species if possible
3. Note how many other individuals of the same species are in the vicinity (flying, swimming, nesting etc).
4. Contact the DEWHA duty phone for advice on how to handle (0419 293 465) – note that wildlife can be dangerous, particularly if distressed, so no attempt to capture the animal should be made until advised.
5. DEWHA to liaise with experts and AMSA to provide advice as soon as possible to the onsite officers.

Specific instructions for Oiled birds

1. If birds can be caught, put in a box big enough to allow bird to fully rotate (but not necessarily stretch wings) – put 20mm diameter (maximum) holes around the box to allow airflow.
2. Box mustn't go in air conditioning – place on rear deck out of the weather.
3. If birds feet feel cold, place warm water in sealed bottle in the box (to act like a water bottle).
4. Contact DEWHA as soon as possible.

Concept of Operations agreed:

Tania Rishniw
Assistant Secretary
Department for the Environment, Water,
Heritage and the Arts.

Concept of Operations approved:

Jamie Storrie
Incident Controller
(Manager, Environment Protection
Response)
Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Attachment A – Shoreline Oiling Assessment Form

ATTACHMENT A - SHORELINE OILING ASSESSMENT

This completed form should be submitted to the Shoreline Coordinator

Incident	West Atlas Oil Spill		
Date		Time	

Island (West, Middle or East):		REPORTING DETAILS:
Area of shoreline assessed (N,E,S,W):		Assessment By Name: _____
GPS Location (if possible):		Position: _____

OIL DISTRIBUTION AND CHARACTER

PARAMETER	Low tide zone	Middle of tidal zone	High tide zone	Above high tide line
Shoreline Type	<i>Beach</i>			
Substrate Type	<i>Course gravel/pebbles/coral rubble</i>			
Width of Area Assessed				
Oil Band Width (m)				
% Cover of Oil in Band				
Length of Beach Oiled				
Surface Oil Thickness				
Appearance				
Debris Present? y/n				
Detail of Oiled Debris				
Depth of Oiling (From Beach Surface)				
Length of Buried Oil Bands (m/cm)				
Description of Buried Oil				

