

Chapter 13 Emergency Planning

Guiding Principles:

Chapter 4 details all the guiding principles relevant to the overall management of the Harbour. Whilst all should be given some consideration the following are of particular relevance to emergency planning.

Key Guiding Principle numbers: 1 and 22

13.1 Chemical / Oil Spills

13.1.1 Introduction

Poole Harbour is considered to be at low risk from a significant oil or chemical spill within the Harbour but there is always the chance of a major oil incident in the English Channel, which could affect its waters and adjacent beaches. Authorities therefore need to be able to respond to incidents of any size and the Environment Agency's, Pollution Prevention Guidance note, PPG21 – Pollution Incident Response Planning has been prepared to assist local bodies in drawing up pollution incident response plans. In response to the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention) Regulations 1998, Poole Harbour Commissioners have prepared an oil response contingency plan known as "Poolspill".



13.1.2 Poolspill

Poolspill is a contingency plan designed to provide the management, control and communications structure for dealing with oil and other hazardous substance release within Poole Harbour Commissioners area of responsibility. It was agreed through consultation with Dorset County Council, Purbeck District Council, Borough of Poole, English Nature, DEFRA and the Environment Agency. The plan has also been approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), who are the competent UK authority that responds to pollution incidents from shipping and offshore installations. Guidelines created by the MCA ensure that the National Contingency Plan (NCP) and local plans, including those such as Poolspill, work in harmony to enable an effective response to any incident.

It covers scenarios ranging from local through to national scale incidents. The plan is informed by, and interfaces with, many other contingency documents, such as those maintained by local councils, oil companies and the MCA.

The plan contains contact details for the various individuals and organisations who need to be informed of and respond to an incident, along with ongoing training requirements for personnel.

As well as a risk assessment of the various activities within the Harbour that could potentially result in a pollution incident it details site specific response strategies for different areas around the Harbour. The shoreline of the Harbour is a combination of many different habitats and substrates, from concrete walls and slipways to tidal mudflats and saltmarshes. All of these respond differently to the various clean up techniques that can be employed and the situation may be further complicated by the time of year that the spill occurs in. The Plan contains a clean-up options matrix which suggests the preferred method for different shore types.

The effectiveness of Poolspill as a contingency plan is tested every year by a simulated spill exercise. This assesses the readiness and response of all those who would be called to deal with a real life incident and ensures that communication centres and equipment deployments are as effective as possible.

Contingency plans continue to evolve as technology changes and the understanding and experience of spill incidents grow, but one of the key components of a successful contingency strategy is ensuring co-operation between all the main stakeholders. On a European level, the Emergency Response to Coastal Oil, Chemical and Inert Pollution from Shipping (EROCIPS) project looks to initiate an even wider level of integration between different countries.

13.1.3 Responsibilities

Poole Harbour Commissioners (PHC), as the statutory harbour authority for Poole, are responsible for the planning and preparation of the response to oil spills and the coordination of the clean up effort on water. The local authorities (Poole and Purbeck) are responsible for the co-ordination of clean-up efforts on shore. Depending on the size of the incident then it may be necessary to involve county or national bodies who may take over responsibility for operations. Other organisations such as English Nature, the Environment Agency, SSFDC and oil companies may all have a role to play in the event of a spill incident and their responsibilities are detailed within the Poolspill document. Nationally the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, places local organisations into two separate categories depending on their roles and responsibilities in planning for and responding to any incident.

13.1.4 Spill Categorisation

Oil spills are categorised using an internationally recognised tier system, which relates to the size of the spill and therefore the appropriate response.

- Tier 1 – A small operational spill: Poole Harbour Commissioners have the equipment and personnel trained to deal with this scale of spill without the assistance of outside authorities.
- Tier 2 – A medium sized spill: PHC have a contract with Oil Spill Response Ltd in Southampton who will attend an incident at the port with specialised equipment and trained personnel. Local BP resources can also be mobilised to augment PHC resources. Other agencies such as local authorities, English Nature, the emergency services and the Environment Agency will also be involved and, in some instances, so will the Government.
- Tier 3 – A large spill: An incident of this size will require national resources and the Government in the form of the Secretary of State's representative (SOSREP) will take control and will co-ordinate the overall response.

13.2 Non Spill Emergencies

Although chemical spills are the focus of most of the contingency planning within the Harbour, key organisations such as PHC, BP and Local Authorities also produce emergency plans which detail responses to other potential incidents. Events such as explosions, fires and even terrorist attacks, all need to be considered and a contingency plan put in place to ensure the safety of personnel and members of the public.

The production of emergency contingency plans demonstrates a proactive approach by the key organisations involved which will minimise the potential social, economic and environmental cost of any incident in or around the Harbour.

Management Objectives:

The following is a list of the management objectives identified which are specific to emergency planning. All management objectives can be found in the matrix contained within Section 2, which also lists proposed management actions.

- To review and exercise oil spill contingency plan as required.
- To ensure appropriate emergency & contingency plans are in place.