

South Australia has about 8000 km of coastline and hence is more vulnerable than other States from the threat of pollution by oil. The Marine Operations Group of Transport SA is responsible for the management of the National Plan in South Australia and for ensuring that State and Regional Plans are maintained to deal with oil spills wherever they occur in State waters.

The National Plan to combat pollution of the sea by oil provides all the States with a level of preparedness to the threat posed to the marine environment by oil spills. The plan has been in existence since 1973, has been reviewed in 1993, and will be reviewed again in 2001. Such reviews increase the capabilities of the plan significantly.

The plan provides spray equipment, dispersants, recovery devices and ship to ship transfer equipment at strategically placed locations around the coast. South Australia is also home to aerial spraying aircraft which are always on standby to deal with emergencies.

The Marine Operations Group also conducts regular training courses and exercises to ensure any incident in South Australia can be handled efficiently and effectively by trained personnel.



Statistics

There were no major spills in South Australia in 1997–1999. However, there were 45 responses mounted in 1997–1998 to minor incidents.

Two of these were rated as significant minor spills, which were:

- A spill of heavy fuel oil from the Port Adelaide bunker barge.
- A spill of heavy fuel oil from MSC Edna at Outer Harbour Port Adelaide.

What can you do?

You can help keep our waters clean.

Polluters of our oceans and beaches must be held responsible for their actions.

If you witness pollution from a ship or notice oil on any State waters, please contact your nearest port operator:

The Adelaide Outer Harbour signal station
Telephone 08 82483505 or
Marine Operations Group, Transport SA,
Telephone 08 83475025

If possible, please provide the following information:

- When and where the pollution occurred
- The type of substance discharged
- Extent of the pollution
- Name of vessel or other source
- Any other relevant information
- Your contact details.

The incident will always be investigated and a suitable response mounted.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF TRANSPORT WA.

Protecting our WATERS



providing safer cleaner waters



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMSA

Australia depends almost exclusively on shipping for its imports and exports. There are about 12,000 ship visits to Australia each year involving the movement of approximately 350 million tonnes of cargo. Annually, about 1000 ships other than tankers transit South Australian waters and in excess of 8.5 million tonnes of petroleum products either as crude or refined products also transit this State's waters.

Protecting our WATERS

Oil pollution – containment and recovery

Everybody contributes to oil pollution. Pouring cooking oil down the sink, allowing oil leaking from a car to enter storm water drains etc, all adds to the amount of oil entering our waterways in one way or the other. Oil pollution sourced from the maritime industry may originate from a ship or barge loading or discharging oil, or from bunker or waste oil discharged from engine rooms of various vessels. Serious pollution incidents have usually only occurred when there have been accidents between ships, which have resulted in oil leaking from ruptured tanks of the vessels involved.

Regardless of the source, about 3.2 million metric tonnes of oil finds its way into the world's oceans each year. This includes natural seepage from the ocean bed, which accounts for 8% of the total amount.

In many cases it will be impossible to keep oil from the shores of our State.

The methods used to clean oil stranded on the beaches and coast, depends on the type of oil spilt and the type of shore affected. Sometimes it is better to leave the oil alone and let



it bio-remediate. At times more damage can be caused by the clean up teams trampling through sensitive areas than by the oil itself. Oil that comes ashore on beaches can normally be cleaned with no serious long-term damage to commercial and recreational activity. Oil that comes ashore on sandy beaches may be cleaned by mechanical means such as bulldozers, graders and other earth moving equipment, and the contaminated sand removed and replaced with fresh sand from another location.

RSPCA Marine Rescue Unit

The RSPCA Marine Rescue Unit was opened in 1991. The complex, since 1994, has been solely used as a rescue and rehabilitation facility caring for marine animals with the aim being to eventually release them back into their natural environment. In the last 12 months the RSPCA Marine Rescue Unit has provided rehabilitation facilities for twenty-five different marine animals including seals, pelicans,

penguins and numerous sea birds. RSPCA officers have also assisted in numerous rescue and release operations on beaches across South Australia.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RSPCA

On a much larger scale there have been times when the Marine Rescue Unit has played a crucial role, none more so than the 1991 oil spill in Spencer Gulf where hundreds of birds were covered with fuel oil when the ship 'Era' was holed in a berthing accident. Volunteers and staff worked around the clock washing and caring for these animals.

The RSPCA Marine Rescue Unit also has a mobile Wildlife Response Trailer to assist the survival of coastal animals in the event of an oil spill along our coast line or in remote regions of South Australia. This trailer was supplied and funded by Transport SA.

Is it oil?

With the onset of summer, the waters of South Australia heralds the appearance of a biological phenomenon commonly known as 'sea scum'. This is also known by its generic biological name of

Trichodesium, which are short filaments of algal plant life united in groups of 50 to 100. When disturbed by wind and sea these groups of algae that are visible to the



naked eye appear as grey to fawn coloured streaks on the water.

However, under different conditions the algae can also be red, red brown or yellow in colour, often resembling oil. As the algae decays it gives off an offensive odour similar to chlorine, iodine or oil. Depending on the colour, it is difficult to differentiate between the algae and oil. The best test is to rub it between your fingers. Oil will not wash off in water and requires a degreasing agent. Trichodesium will release from your hands back into the water.

