

Benefits and Challenges in Government-Industry Partnership in Oil Spill Preparedness and Response: Perspective of the International Response Organization

Archie Smith

Declan O'driscoll

Daniel Chan

Oil Spill Response

E-mail Address: singapore@oilspillresponse.com

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) "International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, 1990" (OPRC 90) has been in force for more than 13 years. This convention has been the catalyst and the reference point for international stakeholders, working to improve oil spill preparedness and response around the world. The IMO/IPIECA Global Initiative (GI) Programme with strong support from national government and industry continues to play an important role in promoting better oil spill preparedness and response on a global basis.

Twenty (20) years have elapsed since the Exxon Valdez incident and clearly the industry has been successful in reducing the frequency of major oil spill incidences through better preventive measures and international operational standards. The improvement in oil spill preparedness and response has also been significant in the East Asian Seas region. These improvements can be measured by way of the "Six Elements of Preparedness" derived from the OPRC 90, however ongoing efforts to maintain and to further improve on it will continue into the future.

We continue to learn valuable lessons from every oil spill incident even in industrialised countries where oil spill preparedness and response ranks among the best in the world, as observed in the case of the MT Hebei Spirit incident in South Korea. There is a general consensus among the oil spill preparedness and response community that the "Tiered Preparedness and Response Concept" remains the most efficient and effective way to sustainably meet the operational challenges for oil spill response.



23-27 November • Manila, Philippines

The “Tiered Preparedness and Response Concept” has been validated globally by government agencies, international organisations and industry as an effective framework to meet the evolving oil spill response needs into the future. More can be done especially to improve operational integration of both in-country and international response resources held by government and industry. Lessons learnt from past incidences provide overwhelming evidences that response resources are more effectively used and deployed when it’s operationally integrated.

Recognising the strategic importance of operational integration, PEMSEA has partnered with national agencies, provincial government, industry and international partners to support the development of the Provincial Oil Spill Contingency Planning initiative in Chonburi, Thailand and the Southern Provinces of Vietnam. This initiative recognises that a Provincial Oil Spill Contingency Plan that is aligned with the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan provides the framework to drive operational integration at the ground level where oil spill response operations can be effectively dealt with.

The OPRC 90 has provided the effective framework for the meaningful advances in oil spill preparedness and response around the world, and remains as the beacon to spur closer government and industry partnerships in the future. The challenge for all of us is to continue “Working Together” to truly achieve the highest operational integration at all levels between government and industry that the OPRC 90 was designed to enable, guide and inspire.

Oil Spill Response is an oil industry funded Tier 3 response organisation with a global remit and operates a regional response base in Singapore for the Asia Pacific Region. Recognising the importance and issues surrounding oil spill preparedness and response we had been proactively involved in the region for the past eight years through our advocacy program that seeks to address these challenges with the support of the oil industry. Oil Spill Response on the 16 December 2006 joined the East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council as a non-country member to provide technical support and operational expertise in partnership with PEMSEA and its members to enhance oil spill preparedness and response in the East Asian Seas region.