

**Saudi Aramco  
Oil Spill Contingency Plan**

**By**

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## **Overview**

The importance of the Arabian Gulf to the economy of the region and of the world cannot be overstated. More than a quarter of the world's crude oil is produced by the Gulf States in the region and there is also significant offshore gas and NGL production. Billions of barrels of crude oil are loaded through terminals on the Gulf and transported by thousands of tankers to most parts of the world, every year. Inherent in this activity, however, is a considerable environmental risk.

Recognizing the importance of the Arabian Gulf as a source of food and water supply, as well as providing work and living for many of its coastal residents, the national agencies and the oil industry go to great lengths to ensure the safety of operations and to protect the marine environments. The emphasis is always on preventing the escape or accidental spillage of oil but when spills occur, governments and industry have in place oil spill contingency plans supported by equipment, to provide a suitable response.

## **Saudi Arabian National Contingency Plan**

The Saudi Arabian National Contingency Plan for Combating Marine Environment Pollution by Oil and Other Harmful Substances was approved in February 1991. The plan seeks to establish mechanisms for coordinated and swift response to protect the marine environment and the Saudi coastline from the effects of pollution through the maximum use of available regional and international resources.

It is the policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that exploration for oil and the handling and transportation of oil and other harmful substances is to be carried out in such a manner as to minimize the risk of environmental and economic damage or threat to public health. In the event that a spillage does occur, swift and effective action will be taken to minimize the environmental and public health and welfare risks resulting from that spillage.

The plan designates the Saudi Arabian Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA) as the national response coordinator for oil spill activities. The plan, also, establish national, area-wide and local responsibility for oil spill prevention and control as well as the development of area and local response plans.

The various activities associated with response to pollution accidents on the national level are assigned to MEPA. Under the National Plan, MEPA shall formulate, publish and monitor the implementation of the policies, regulations and procedures for pollution fighting and control. MEPA undertakes surveillance and studies necessary for tracking oil spills. Also, it conducts environmental studies to ascertain the impact of pollution. During response to major spill crisis, MEPA shall determine equipment requirements to implement the National Plan.

The National Plan requires the development of area and local response plans. Area plans for the Arabian Gulf and for the red sea shall be developed by its respective Area Operations Committee. Under the chairmanship of MEPA and membership from various concerned ministries, an Area Operations Committee shall be formulated for each of Arabian Gulf and Red Sea. The Area Plan shall detail the operational guidelines and procedures that are necessary for the response to pollution accidents which require an area-wide response. All organizations that have marine or coastal installations or facilities each within its own jurisdiction shall formulate local plans for pollution fighting.

Response activities to control pollution nationwide shall be coordinated by MEPA to ensure maximum efficiency for the use of national and international resources. On the regional level, the respective Area Operations Committees in the Arabian Gulf and in the Red Sea shall plan and coordinate response activities in each of the two areas in the cases of pollution that require an area-wide response. On the local level, all organizations which have marine or coastal installations or facilities shall provide the manpower and equipment necessary to protect them and to carry out pollution fighting activities and cleanup within their respective facilities. Each organization shall appoint an official in charge of response to pollution in every installation or area under its jurisdiction. Outside those areas where no responsibility is assigned, MEPA shall assume the responsibility for pollution response.

### **Saudi Aramco Oil Spill Contingency Plan**

Saudi Aramco's earliest efforts were focused on self-sufficiency in handling spills, and the company built specialized oil spill recovery and containment vessels, and purchased equipment and materials to combat spills. In 1989 Saudi Aramco designated a task

force and a high level review committee to assess our capability worldwide and make recommendations where needed.

As a result of the review task force recommendations, we have developed the Global Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

- The plan establishes an oil spill policy for Saudi Aramco's worldwide operations.
- It directs Saudi Aramco and its affiliates to join major cooperatives.
- It assigns regional responsibility for oil spills and requires the development, implementation, and maintenance of regional and owned tanker oil spill plans. The regional plans outline formal notification procedures for involved countries, and Saudi Aramco. Regional plans include local legislative requirements, define response options, and identify available resources for combating oil spills.

Recognizing the potential impact of oil spills, a management-level Oil Spill Committee was established in 1990. It sets overall policy regarding the prevention and cleanup of oil spills resulting from Saudi Aramco operations. A permanent organization, the Global Oil Spill Coordination Group, was established to execute and coordinate all activities of the company relating to prevention and control of marine oil spills. In the event of an oil spill, the Regional Oil Spill Coordinator (ROSC) directs an Oil Spill Response Team (OSRT) to combat the spill. He has responsibility for all activities related to activating the response team including: safe & efficient control, cleanup operations, disposal, restoration, and documentation of oil spills. A contingency plan has been formalized and developed for each region.

Oil pollution control equipment is staged at both the Arabian Gulf and at the Red Sea. At the Arabian Gulf, equipment is located at Tanajib up north and at Ras Tanura down south. Equipment includes recovery vessels, booms, skimmers, storage barges, air and sea born dispersant systems.

At the Red Sea region we staged equipment at each facilities. Equipment at each location was designed as a tier 1 to handle small to medium size spills in the vicinity of

each facility. In the event of a major oil spill which is believed to be beyond local response capability, extra resources will be brought in from Ras Tanura and from other sources as deemed necessary.

In order to strengthen Saudi Aramco's oil spill combatting capabilities, the company has acquired membership and participation on an international scale, in organizations that provide cooperative assistance in the event of an oil spill and sharing of oil spill technology. These organizations are: Oil Spill Response (OSR) Ltd. at England which currently provides a worldwide spill response capability; Clean Caribbean Cooperative (CCC) for the Caribbean Sea area; the Marine Preservation Association (MPA) in the united states; Marine Industry Response Group (MIRG) in the Gulf of Mexico, and Gulf Area Oil Companies Mutual Aid Organization (GAOCMAO) in the Arabian Gulf. In addition, we recognize the two equipment stockpiles which were recently staged by Japan at each of Al Khafji, Saudi Arabia and at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The staging of the two stockpiles are considered to be a big step for enhancing response capability in the region.

In order to enhance the company's readiness to combat oil spills, specialized response training courses are conducted to ensure readiness of company personnel. These are targeted for company employees that form the regional oil spill response team. Our training takes different levels: operators or hands on, supervisors level, and management crisis courses. In addition, annual oil spill exercises are conducted to test our contingency plans and the readiness of the oil spill response teams. For example, one response course and one exercise are scheduled in 1996 for each of Rabigh Refinery and Yanbu operations in the Red Sea coast. Response courses are normally run for 3 to 5 days by the training staff of the Oil Spill Response Limited in England. Exercises are run for one day. Concerned governmental agencies are usually invited to attend Saudi Aramco training courses and exercises.