

UK Continental Shelf Surveillance and Dispersant Spraying Service



Oil Spill Response in the United Kingdom Continental Shelf Offshore Operating Areas

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) are responsible for setting the regulations and issuing guidance notes for the provision of oil spill response capability within the UKCS area of offshore operations. These have been in place since 1999 as a result of the UK's implementation of the IMO Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention (OPRC). The guidelines establish the standards for response provided by operators involved in offshore exploration and production activities. The criteria for response is based upon the environmental sensitivity of the location, the nature of the oil and prescribed response times for certain levels of spill.



Requirements for response to exploration, appraisal and production operations

Spill quantity	Highly sensitive area (in or adjacent to Category 1 UKDMAP block)	All other sensitivity levels
Tier 1 (25-tonne spill)	Response within 1 hour	
Tier 1 (100-tonne spill)*	Response within 2 hours	Response within 2 hours
Tier 2 (500-tonne spill)	Response within 6 hours	Response within 6 hours
Tier 3 (10,000 tonne spill)	Response within 18 hours	Response within 18 hours

* 20 tonnes for Group 1 and 2 oil producing areas

- ◆ In addition to the actual spill response requirements, operators are required to be able to carry out aerial surveillance to effectively monitor the situation.
- ◆ Oil and gas operators and those exploring in areas with unknown hydrocarbon characteristics are required to be able to provide both response and surveillance services. Those in known gas producing areas are required only to conduct surveillance operations. It is crucial that operators can guarantee rapid access to surveillance and response resources during an incident.

How is the response provided?

Tier 1

For Tier 1 response times to be met, the capability must be present on site. The usual means of providing response capability to use supply boat-mounted dispersant spray equipment either in field or on the platform offshore. Given the traditional planning volume of 20:1 for the use of dispersants, this equates to a stock of five tonnes of dispersants being available. In areas producing Group 1 or 2 oils only one tonne of dispersant is required.

The encounter rate of these systems is low due to the limited swath and speed of the vessels so if a physical response is needed, speed is critical and escalation of the response must be considered immediately.

Tier 2

The introduction of the OPRC guidelines led us to develop a Tier 2 service to meet response requirements in a cost effective manner. The UKCS aerial service utilises a Cessna 310 aircraft for surveillance operations and a Cessna 406 for dispersant operations. The service comprises:

- ◆ A dedicated primary surveillance aircraft equipped with the following sensors and systems:
 - ◆ IR and UV cameras plus
 - ◆ Forward looking video
 - ◆ High resolution colour camera and low light camera
 - ◆ Marine VHF and Satcom for long range communication and data transfer
 - ◆ GPS systems.

All data is recordable and date/ position stamped. The Satcom system enables data to be transferred directly from the aircraft to client offices, vessels or platforms equipped with an email system.

A backup surveillance aircraft offers the same level of response capability as the primary aircraft, providing cover during routine maintenance or in the event of breakdown of the primary aircraft:

- ◆ A fallback surveillance aircraft equipped with handheld surveillance equipment
- ◆ A separate UKCS dispersant spray aircraft with a capacity of 1.25 tonnes.

Tier 3

Operators in the UKCS are required to have the capability to respond to major oil spills. To achieve this Members have access to all of the resources of **Oil Spill Response**, but in particular to the ADDS Pack and NIMBUS™ systems for use with the L382 Hercules aircraft retained by **Oil Spill Response**. Our Aberdeen office located at the MCA building is available for Members' use in the event of a spill.

As part of the service **Oil Spill Response** will also make this capability available to all UKCS operators contracted into the Tier 2 service for use in the UK pollution zone. The Hercules aircraft can only be mobilised through the **Oil Spill Response** Duty Manager. Separate arrangements would need to be made by gas only operators.

The UKCS Service is available, upon payment of UKCS service subscription, to members of **Oil Spill Response**. Should you require any further information on this service, please contact:

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