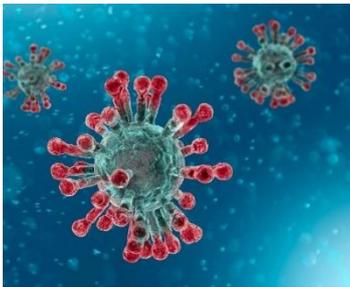


Response Readiness Drill: Verification of OSRL's ability to mount a response mobilisation during COVID-19

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1. Executive Summary

Exercise Details	
Exercise Date	26 th March 2020
Exercise Location	Virtual table-top drill conducted using Microsoft Teams software as the enabling platform
Exercise Focus Area	Provision of incident response support, whilst remote working; Activation of OSRL third party service providers (aviation, Global Dispersant Stockpile (GDS) mobilisation support, road transport hauliers)
Number of Participants	15
Scenario/Scope	<p>Location: United Kingdom Continental Shelf</p> <p>A drifting vessel has damaged subsea infrastructure. The vessel dropped the anchors and it resulted in damage to the Gannet D subsea cluster/ Gannet D connecting pipeline.</p> <p>Source of spill is unconfirmed; but narrowed down to 2 potential sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gannet D damaged wellhead (well blowout) - Gannet D damaged pipeline (release of production line content)

Aim and Objectives	
Aim	To test OSRL's ability to provide the expected level of response support to a Member organisation in the face of the restrictions in place due to COVID-19.
Objectives	<p>a) Test the 'chasing the sun' call out procedure, specifically through the Singapore Duty Manager's DM ability to manage the initial mobilisation process for a UK based response.</p> <p>b) Test the incident handover process from Singapore DM to UK DM to ensure continuity and quality is maintained.</p> <p>c) Mobilise the Aberdeen Technical Advisor to support the client at its designated incident command centre.</p> <p>d) Deliver two oil spill modelling reports within 2 hours of request</p> <p>e) Mobilise UKCS surveillance aircraft and B727 aircraft – up to the point when air crew would meet at the airport (to adhere to social distancing and to preserve integrity of crew).</p> <p>f) Mobilise additional GDS Dispersant (Inverness) - up to the point when contractor would go to the warehouse to load the trailers (to adhere to social distancing)</p> <p>g) Mobilise two 40ft trailers of equipment (road freighted) – up to the point when contracted drivers would report to Southampton base to drive the trailers offsite (to adhere to social distancing).</p> <p>h) Mobilise a full team of 18 responders, as per service Level Agreement (SLA) – up to the point of responders packing their bags (to adhere to social distancing and to preserve the Team A and Team B segregation and response readiness)</p>

Exercise Completion	
Objectives achieved?	Yes
Safety Remarks	As a table-top virtual drill there were minimal safety considerations, however, in terms of wellbeing and stress management new dynamics were observed: With no other indicators other than verbal cues, there is no perception of visual insights regarding staff fatigue or stress. Encouraging team members to regularly take breaks and ask direct questions regarding stress levels is advised.
Major findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OSRL can effectively manage a mobilisation with a remote EOC setup - Monitoring fatigue and stress is more challenging virtually - Establish and maintain good communications protocol - Team workload insight: For the DM, it is challenging to establish how busy/not busy/overloaded team members are - IT challenges can “make or break” team member’s ability to support response. Poor broadband/signal will limit a team member’s effectiveness and contribution - Situational awareness for the duty team is more challenging; No access to EOC boards, no proximity with other team members, no perception of major developments unless verbally stated.
Debrief Date:	26/03/2020

2. Introduction

Drills are an integral part of OSRL's internal Assurance Plan which encompasses all aspects of response and is typically broken down into five capability elements:

People: Ensuring that the right people, with the right skills are in the right place at the right time

Process: To provide procedural mechanisms that maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of capability

Equipment: Ensuring that the right tools for the job are available, effective and maintained to the right standard

Aviation: Ensuring aviation services are fit for purpose and fully integrated

Logistics: To ensure that mobilisation can be mounted to any global location at short notice with minimal delay.

The drill carried out on the 26th March focused specifically on People, Process, Aviation and Logistics elements.

This was initially planned as a part of the readiness and assurance plan. We changed this to a scheduled drill and modified the original plan considering the current situation and the need to test a remote EOC. It was performed by OSRL's duty team and third-party service providers to ensure that the ability to respond remains as per the members expectation, despite the restrictions faced through COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the current circumstances and restrictions imposed to the movement of personnel and face-to-face interaction, it was more pertinent than ever to test OSRL's capability to support its' members and re-instate confidence in the ability to respond.

The OSRL Readiness Team developed a scenario, objectives and evaluation criteria for the Scheduled drill. The team focused on the evaluation of performance in two key areas:

- Feasibility of responding to an incident by utilising a virtual platform to facilitate the duty team interface
- Timely delivery of OSRL services, as requested by the member

It is important to disclose that OSRL staff and contractors were not physically mobilised during this drill to protect their personal safety and maintain compliance with the UK government advice on social distancing. As such, the physical elements relating to the mobilisation of resources were not tested in this drill. If OSRL is mobilised, all efforts to protect OSRL personnel and third parties will be followed as far as is reasonably practicable. Risk assessments and mitigations will be judged on a case-by-case basis bringing specific variables into consideration at the time of the mobilisation.

3. Execution

The drill started at 0530 UTC with a phone call to the (DM). Call was initially picked up by Security in the Southampton base and transferred to the Singapore DM within 10 minutes to meet the 10-minute Service Level Agreement requirement for a DM call back within 10 minutes. This tested the OSRL ‘chasing the sun’¹ process. The DM in Singapore took the initial information promptly and handled the call as expected, triaging key information providing response options and offering OSRL support (objective a). This call finished at 0540 UTC. The handover between the Singapore DM and Southampton DM was swift and efficient; The Duty Managers exchanged information quickly and the member received a call back from the Southampton DM within 30 minutes (objective b). The OSRL ‘chasing the sun’ procedure allows 60 minutes for this process to provide sufficient time to mobilise a duty team within the incident region, so they can take over the management of the mobilisation.

A virtual EOC call using Microsoft Teams was established at 0610, with all Duty Team members calling in within 5 minutes of call set-up. The initial team brief by the Duty Manager took 10 minutes, including delegation of specific tasks. Tasks delegated were in line with the client request, see table 1.

Table 1 - Member Requests and Initial Tasks Delegated

Member Request	Element	Initial Task
Technical Advisor support in the command centre	People	Contact Aberdeen Technical Advisors; Establish who is going to be mobilised and respective response time to command centre
Mobilise Personnel SLA	People	Consult resource planning software and identify individuals based on expertise relevant to the scenario
Dispersant application aircraft mobilised	Aviation	Mobilise the aircraft. Establish response timings and Forward Operating Base for B727
Surveillance aircraft mobilised	Aviation	Mobilise the aircraft. Establish response timings and forward operating base for surveillance aircraft
Mobilise 2 trailers of equipment to Aberdeen	Logistics - Equipment	Contact road freight haulier and establish estimated times of arrival of equipment in Aberdeen
Mobilise nearest dispersant stockpile	Logistics - Dispersant	Contact Inverness GDS point of contact and establish response times

¹ Chasing the sun is an approach which best utilises OSRL’s global footprint, rather than manning any one base’s Emergency Operations Centre 24/7, we automatically transfer the initial calls to the most appropriate base to ensure the member speaks to a Duty Manager within or close to their office hours. They will then start the mobilisation process as required giving the regional Duty Team time to mobilise to base and then hand over.

The virtual EOC ran as a continuous call for 8 hours. During the drill the DM emphasized the importance of maintaining good communication and briefed the team on client requests/expectations in regular intervals. Open/closed actions were discussed during the time-outs and further support assigned when required.

OSRL services provided by contracted parties:

Throughout the drill, notional mobilisation of OSRL service providers was carried in accordance with current standing operating procedures, using telephone lines to communicate with respective duty officers. The information, outputs and results provided by the duty officers were not simulated, it was real-world information. The OSRL duty team founded their decision making and next actions based on the real-world information. Mobilisation of OSRL services provided by contracted parties (objectives e, f, and g) were met within expected response timeframe for the services tested (UKCS surveillance, B727 dispersant aircraft, GDS Inverness and road transport haulier).

People:

18 individuals were identified within 4 hours of the member requesting Service Level Agreement (objective h); Personnel were identified on the basis of operational expertise to match the drill scenario and individuals who could travel without being denied entry in the UK due to country of origin. Based on passenger flight availability on the 26th March, the last SLA responders to arrive at the command centre (Aberdeen) would be two responders from Bahrain, arriving on the 28th March. This indicates that a complete SLA team would have been available within 48 hours of request. Two Technical Advisors would have reported to the command centre in less than 2 hours from the request for Technical Advisor support (objective c).

Process:

Regarding the use of Microsoft Teams, the duty team adhered to a good communication etiquette, which allowed them to work efficiently and communicate seamlessly: Non-essential conversation was kept to a minimum, and in-depth conversations regarding practicalities of mobilisation logistics were conducted in separate calls. Critical information (well name, name and address of staging area etc.) was typed in the group call message board so as to serve as unambiguous reference.

Throughout the drill, the duty team faced several IT challenges, ranging from broadband speeds which affected download/upload performance, poor mobile signal, and computers needing to restart. The team dealt with the ad-hoc challenges promptly, by redistributing open actions from the members affected, to those that had the capability to continue with the task.

Two Modelling reports were delivered within 2 hours of client request (objective d), notwithstanding the fact that broadband connectivity was poor at one stage.

4. Lessons Learned

The following lessons have been identified as major learnings; additional learning points and good practice was communicated to response team members.

Lesson #1: Monitoring team members' fatigue is more challenging virtually, as perception of visual clues regarding staff fatigue is lost when working remotely

Action Taken: Suggest that DM encourages team members to alternate and stop for 5-minute breaks regularly

Lesson #2: Establish and maintain good communications protocol when working remotely using Microsoft Teams

Action Taken: Example of ground rules shared with OSRL response teams

Lesson #3: Duty team workload insight: For the DM, it is challenging to establish how busy/not busy/overloaded team members are

Action Taken: DM to highlight the importance of team members verbally confirming when actions have been completed or when workload needs to be shared. Implementation of a simple action tracker may improve workload awareness

Lesson #4: Situational awareness for the remote duty team is more challenging, having the client calls on speaker next to the DM's laptop and therefore audible on the Teams call makes a significant difference.

Action Taken: Ensure all duty teams use an open mic policy for all client and other relevant calls to improve situational awareness.

Lesson #5: IT challenges can "make or break" team member's ability to support response. Poor broadband/signal will limit a team member's effectiveness and contribution.

Action Taken: Briefed duty team on good practice to deal with ah-hoc IT problems: establish which team members are more likely to be affected by poor connectivity and re-assign tasks when required.

5. Evaluation

The drill objectives were met within the parameters set for testing; All objectives were met within expected operational timeframe, as per standard operating procedures. The drill demonstrated that it is possible to provide the expected level of response support to a member, without having the OSRL duty team working face to face. After the drill, the duty team recognised that the face-to-face interface was missed by most members, as well as missing whiteboards normally used to capture information in the actual EOC. The participants acknowledged that although apprehensive about the drill, it was a positive and valuable experience, as it provided the opportunity to test the virtual interface as close to reality as possible.

However, it is important to understand that remote working does not come without challenges: Bandwidth connectivity, phone signal and personal laptop performance can ultimately be an impediment to meeting the member's expectations within the usual timeframe. The option for the duty team to work face to face from the office should be maintained, and ultimately left to the consideration of the Duty Manager, Incident Manager and Executive Team to decide given the circumstances.

Team exercises based on the virtual EOC set up should be conducted by the other duty teams. The major benefit of testing the virtual EOC is the ability to experience the adaptation that is required to make remote response support possible, as well as an effective platform to enable service delivery.

It was also detected that the quality of some of the outputs generated was not reaching the quality level that OSRL aims to provide. Tasking documents such as those generated for the offshore team, dispersant B727 and UCKS surveillance aircraft lacked the technical detail required to perform the task. Nevertheless, a positive observation made was that the DM was quality controlling the taskings prior to issuing to the member. Provisions to close this gap have been made through team training in the upcoming weeks.

Although the role of OSRL member in this drill was role-played, it was concluded that there was no detriment to the level of service provided. Questions were answered in a timely manner; confirmation of mobilisation was received within the expected time frame; Documents, taskings and reports were being delivered on time by the DM.

The following recommendations are made:

- **Technical Advisor, Virtual Support**
OSRL members are currently testing their own virtual response capability, using a variety of software as their platform (Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Web IAP). It would be beneficial for OSRL to test this with a member, as remote technical advice/support may be requested by the member, and the expectation would be that an OSRL TA's would join their virtual rooms. At present, OSRL have not been made aware that this may be requested in the near future.
- **Monitor availability of passenger flights to/from Singapore, London, Bahrain, and Fort Lauderdale**
Commercial aviation (passenger transit) has been adapting to current conditions by temporarily suspending routes and this trend is set to continue in the foreseeable future. With a reduction of flights available, it is possible that delivery of the full personnel SLA will take longer than expected.

6. Conclusion

When referring to the objectives set and the two areas of focus for the exercise it is possible to conclude the following:

- It is possible to work as a response team virtually, although certain elements will have to be managed slightly differently. Situational awareness and wellbeing management can be negatively affected by remote working, if not managed properly.
- Timely delivery of OSRL services, as requested by the member is possible, as demonstrated by the achievement of all objectives.

Further testing and exercising are highly encouraged because for the foreseeable future, remote working and the use of virtual platforms to facilitate the interface might be the most practical way of providing response support whilst keeping people and communities safe. Exercising promotes gradual familiarisation with new ways of working, under controlled conditions.