



# Creating a Culture of Preparedness

## *The International Oil Spill Conference.*

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The U.S. Coast Guard is continually challenged to ensure that the oil spill response community is prepared to respond effectively to oil spills. To address this challenge, we seek ways to coordinate preparedness efforts. One such way we facilitate this is through our leadership role and active participation in the triannual International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC).

### **History**

The IOSC is jointly sponsored by industry, government, and non-government organizations and is considered the Americas' premier oil spill preparedness, prevention, and response conference, reflecting 39 years of global environmental progress. Since its inception in 1969, a total of 20 International Oil Spill Conferences have been held. The inaugural conference was held in New York in 1969 and was followed by biannual conferences in various coastal locations throughout the United States and Canada until 2005. In 2005, the IOSC moved to a triennial conference cycle in concert with Interspill and Spillcon—comparable international oil spill conferences hosted in Europe and Australia, respectively. IOSC 2008 reflected the new triennial conference cycle.

The International Oil Spill Conference contributes to and enables preparedness within the oil spill response community, the broader field of incident management, and society as a whole. It provides a forum for professionals from the international community, the private sector, government, and non-governmental organizations to highlight and discuss innovations, lessons

learned, and best practices that encompass prevention, preparedness, response, and restoration.

Furthermore, by providing conference scholarships it encourages participation from countries still working to develop their marine environmental response programs. Each IOSC also hosts a subcommittee to work on a project that is of interest to the international community. For example, the outcome of the IOSC 2008 workshop subcommittee was an international guide for oil spill response capabilities assessment.

### **IOSC 2008**

The theme of IOSC 2008 was "creating a culture of preparedness." This theme served as a reminder to the response community that preparedness is a critical component of any oil spill response. More than 2,000 people from over 80 countries were in attendance for the technical sessions and viewed more than 250 exhibits. The conference began with a series of short courses that ranged in topic from the basics of oil spill response to oil spill response techniques in the Arctic and the use of dispersants. These courses were followed by an on-water demonstration of oil spill response equipment. Such equipment included helicopter deployment of a buoy/probe for oil pollution evidence in the environment, unmanned aerial vehicles, and some of the most state-of-the-art booming equipment available today.

The conference was officially convened by keynote speakers John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, co-hosts

of The History Channel's "Deep Sea Detectives" television show. They provided insight into the dangers involved in deep-sea diving and how crucial experience and training is to any operation, regardless of the profession. This session was followed by 40 technical sessions that included 186 presentations held over three days. The most widely attended sessions were the "hot topic" sessions that addressed:

- the ins and outs of today's liquefied natural gas policy and environmental issues,
- the *Hebei Spirit* incident that occurred in the Republic of Korea on December 7, 2007,<sup>1</sup>
- the *Pemex KAB-121* incident that occurred on October 23, 2007 in the Gulf of Mexico,<sup>2</sup>
- the IOISC workshop panel that provided an in-depth discussion regarding the suite of planning and readiness assessment tools the workshop subcommittee developed.

Finally, in his closing speech, U.S. Coast Guard Commandant ADM Thad Allen highlighted the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Oil and Hazardous Substance Contingency Plan and the importance of cooperation among all levels of government, the private sector, and non-government organizations.

#### Future of IOISC

The next IOISC will be held in 2011 and will be going "green." IOISC 2011's convening dates and location will be announced in late summer 2008 and the general committee is specifically looking for venues that will reduce the conference's environmental impact. The committee will also be analyzing its processes and products to eliminate waste.

Those interested in participating in the 2011 conference as authors, abstract reviewers, paper peer reviewers, or session chairs should regularly check the IOISC website, [www.ioisc.org](http://www.ioisc.org), to receive conference updates and find the appropriate points of contact.

#### About the author:

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#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> On December 7, 2007, the *Hebei Spirit*, a tanker vessel laden with 1.8 million barrels of crude oil, was struck by the crane barge *Samsung No. 1* five miles off the coast of the Republic of Korea after a towing line parted. As a result of the collision, three of the five tanks aboard the *Hebei Spirit* were punctured, causing 2.7 million gallons of crude oil to spill overboard. This was the largest oil spill that the Republic of Korea had experienced, to date, and resulted in devastating environmental and economic effects.

<sup>2</sup> In October 2007, the Usumacinta drilling rig was contracted by Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) to drill a third well alongside a natural gas well and oil well (KAB-121) at the KAB-101 platform in Campeche Sound in the Gulf of Mexico. On October 23, 2007, the Usumacinta collided with the KAB-101 platform and ruptured KAB-101's production tree, resulting in a leak of oil and gas. PEMEX personnel were not able to completely seal the valves during the initial response, which allowed the wells to continually leak oil and gas. Over the following eight weeks, PEMEX worked to gain full control over the wells, which was finally accomplished on December 17, 2007. This incident resulted in 21 reported deaths that occurred during the evacuation of the Usumacinta, 210,000 gallons of unrecovered oil spilled, and two major fires.

### The IOISC is sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard and some of its key maritime partners, including:

- the International Maritime Organization,
- the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
- the American Petroleum Institute,
- the Minerals Management Service,
- the United States Environmental Protection Agency,
- the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association.

The U.S. Coast Guard provides critical leadership to the IOISC as co-chair of the general committee and chair of the program committee.

