



N° 182 E – News from July/August 2010

Emergency response

This month, we continued to closely follow the operations and consequences of the major accident involving the oil rig *Deepwater Horizon*. Two agents from *Cedre* were able to visit the spill area from 17 to 21 July for observation missions (see articles below). We also received many enquiries, during the summer, in particular on the pollution risk following an accident involving a transport barge which sank on the Seine with over 1,500 litres of diesel onboard, as well as the hazardous nature of petroleum products in flexible tanks, and several enquiries from fire brigades following spills of various chemicals and fuel. We alerted the Mediterranean maritime authorities following the arrival of paraffin balls on a beach in Porquerolles. Météo France was called upon for several drift predictions, in particular following the sinking of a yacht in Noirmoutier containing 4 m³ of diesel (it was finally refloated and towed without causing any pollution), as well as in the Channel following the observation of slicks of vegetable oil, in the Bay of Biscay and the Mediterranean following observations of oil pollution, and finally south of Ushant Island (Brittany) following the loss of containers. We also took part in 2 **ICE** exercises, the first run on 22 July by Italy on bromoform, and the second on 17 August by Slovakia on nitric acid.

In short

VISITS

► On 12 July, a delegation from the Republic of Azerbaijan sent by Senator N. Goulet. This delegation, made up of representatives of the Ministry of Ecology, the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the maritime affairs authority, showed great interest in *Cedre's* activities and in particular the training aspect, which would help to improve response to spills which sometimes occur in the country.

Mission in Louisiana

From 17 to 22 July, 2 representatives of *Cedre* took part in informative missions in Louisiana in relation to the situation following the Deepwater Horizon rig incident. They were able to visit the operation command centres in New Orleans, Houma and Venice, take part in surveillance flights, observe the coastal sites affected by the pollution following or during clean-up operations and see coastal protection arrangements. These missions were also the opportunity for exchanges with field personnel, federal bodies and structures belonging to the State of Louisiana and BP and its contractors.

Deepwater Horizon rig (cont.)

The summer period was marked by the stopping of the oil leak. In mid-July, a cap dubbed *Top Hat 10* was fitted over the well, closing off the valves. The leak has been under control since 15 July. In early August, the operation "Static kill", consisting of pumping drilling mud and cement into the well, was conducted. It will be completed shortly by the injection of the same substances via the relief well, so as to definitively seal the well ("Bottom kill" operation). Prior to this operation, the faulty blow out preventer will be replaced. American experts appear to agree on the quantity of oil spilt (780,000 m³ in total), although there are differences of opinion on its fate (evaporated, spread, burnt, recovered...) and on the quantities remaining in the Gulf of Mexico. Furthermore, the **NOAA** has gradually authorised the reopening of fishing areas. In late August, 20% of the Gulf's federal waters remained closed, compared to 33% in early June. Immense quantities of resources continue to be deployed: in late August, 28,500 people were mobilised to clean-up the shoreline and nearly 4,400 vessels and skimmers were deployed. In terms of compensation, by 30 August, over 170,000 claims had been lodged against BP and the other liable parties, and 470 million dollars compensation had been paid by BP.

Dispersant workshops in the Indian Ocean

Cedre has led workshops on dispersants in 6 countries in the western Indian Ocean (Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya). The aim was to enable these countries to develop a dispersant use policy based on a standard document. This work was contracted to *Cedre* by the consortium of the companies OTRA and BRLI, as part of the GEF-Western Indian Ocean marine highway development and coastal and marine contamination prevention project, led by the Indian Ocean Commission, which aims to prepare bordering countries to face the potential consequences of shipping in the Mozambique Canal.

Infrared video camera trials

Trials were conducted in late July in the experimental basin at *Cedre* upon the initiative of the Total Group in partnership with Ajilon Engineering. The aim was to assess the performance of an infrared detector on floating oil, by day and night, and to compare these results with imagery from a digital camera. Several spills were simulated in containment cells, so as to examine the infrared sensor's response to 3 different oils, while varying the thickness of these oils and the height of the camera. The results showed that slicks are fully visible at night and differences between oils can be observed.

New INERIS website

The major changes to INERIS' latest website are new graphic design and improved navigation. The overall organisation has not changed, meaning that users can easily find their marks on the website www.ineris.fr. Furthermore, INERIS has published its new Chemical Substances portal, providing access to toxicological, ecotoxicological and technico-economic data on many chemicals. Chemicals can be found by CAS number or substance name. Data can be exported in pdf format on www.ineris.fr

China: explosion of two pipelines

On 16 July, 2 pipelines belonging to the China Petroleum Corps exploded in the port of Dalian (north-east China) while a tanker was unloading. According to the Chinese media, 1,500 tonnes of oil were spilt into the Yellow Sea and the slick covered a surface area of nearly 430 km². The port of Dalian, one of the very first ports in China, is closed, as are certain beaches and the popular tourist island of Bangchui and fishing was banned. Vast resources were deployed: 800 fishing boats requisitioned, use of chemical foam, booms and 23 tonnes of "crude-eating bacteria". Fishermen took part in response without any protective equipment. On 22 July, the port was partially reopened and the Chinese authorities officially announced the end of clean-up on 26 July.

India: oil spill off Bombay

On 7 August, at the entry to the harbour area of Bombay, the container ship *MSC Chitra* collided with the *MV Khalijia III* and began to overturn before grounding on a rock. The 33 crew members were rescued. The container ship, loaded with 1,219 containers, of which 120 fell overboard, also had onboard 2,700 tonnes of fuel oil and 300 tonnes of diesel. Several hundred tonnes of fuel oil leaked from the crack in the hull, causing major pollution. The Indian authorities immediately closed the two ports in Bombay, so as to begin clean-up operations in the shipping channel. According to the Indian ministry of the environment, this pollution is one of the most serious the country has ever known. The severe damage to neighbouring mangrove swamps is an indicator of the impact on shorelines and local ecosystems. Legal proceedings have begun against the owners of the 2 ships.

United States: pipeline leak

On 28 July, a pipeline belonging to Enbridge Inc in the State of Michigan, transporting Canadian crude oil to the US, burst, causing a spill of an estimated 4,000 m³. The oil reached Talmage Creek, which feeds into the Kalamazoo River, of which a 50 km stretch was polluted. Lake Michigan, into which the Kalamazoo River flows, was fortunately not affected.

Nigeria: the largest oil spill?

An article in the [Guardian](#) refers to a UNEP report, published following 3 years of investigations and funded by SHELL, which estimates oil pollution in the Niger delta at 2 million cubic metres since 1958. These leaks are in part due to sabotage and in part to the dilapidated state of the pipeline network in the area.

Strait of Hormuz: explosion onboard an oil tanker

During the night of 28 July, an explosion affected the Japanese oil tanker *M. Star*, transporting 270,000 tonnes of crude oil, in the Strait of Hormuz, damaging the superstructure and destroying a life boat. The ship was able to reach the port of Fujairah without assistance, for repairs. Fortunately nobody was killed and no pollution was reported. The shipowner and Intertanko pointed to a possible missile attack to explain the incident.

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