

Oil Spill Prevention



Inland Oil Pollution – The triumphs and the challenges

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The good news is that, with the Oil Storage Regulations biting and the partnership work of the Oil Care Campaign bearing fruit, we can expect to see another fall in the amount of fuel and oil-related pollution incidents in England in 2006. Unfortunately, they will still be measured in the 1,000s, not the 100s. And whilst there has been a welcome introduction of the Scottish Oil Storage Regulations, there is still nothing in place for Northern Ireland and Wales (where the Environment Agency has recorded an increase of these incidents).

Another striking feature of these incidents is that the reductions are not purely in the area covered by the Oil Storage Regulations. There have been reductions in all the causes of oil-related incidents, including the campaign's key areas of focus – delivery and pipework. This demonstrates that the modern regulatory approach, such as partnership working, is having a significant impact.

The Environment Agency intends to carry on with this twin-track approach: encouraging compliance with

the regulations and working with all stakeholders to reduce their levels of incidents.

One recent success that we are hoping to build upon is the introduction of a reporting scheme where oil-spill contractors, accredited by the Environment Agency, report their types of spills online through their trade federation. This will help to gain a greater understanding of the issues and therefore target policy in the most needed area.

We have come a long way in achieving the aims of the Oil Storage Regulations and this year we will be having another look at the regulations and preparing a report on the alterations needed to make these regulations achieve their objectives. This will involve dialogue with industry and stakeholders in order that we represent a united front on the alterations that are needed. These will then be passed on to Defra who will decide if these changes should be incorporated.

Initial thoughts are that there is confusion over capacities in different regulations and there are a number of different storage facilities that sit outside of the regulations that pose significant threat.

Fuel for Thought

Another area of focus for the Environment Agency is fuel deliveries. We will be working with industry highlighting the causes of spillage during fuel delivery and encouraging best practise. In addition, we are working with the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers to introduce a new connector between the hose and the tank, enabling faster and safer connection. Overall progress toward the recommendations in the 2005 Oakdene Hollins report: *An Analysis of Inland Oil and Fuel Incidents in England and Wales*, has been successful. However, to date we have not managed to achieve all of its objectives. It is hoped that 2007 will produce results on some of the more taxing issues such as regular oil-storage tank inspections and integrity of HGV fuel tanks on vehicles.

Finally, if there is opportunity, we will increase our partnerships with oil companies. The operating agreement signed between TOTAL and the Environment Agency has proved to be a great success for both parties and it is hoped that similar arrangements can be reached with other companies to bring lasting mutual benefit. ●