

PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

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Cedre (Centre for Documentation, Research and Experimentations on accidental water pollution) was created in 1978 by the French government in the aftermath of the *Amoco Cadiz* spill. Its fundamental purpose is to provide advice and expertise to French and foreign authorities and private businesses in charge of spill response at sea, on the shoreline and in inland waters. As an example, in 2023, Cedre provided advice in 245 emergency cases linked to pollution or unusual / worrying phenomena observed at sea, in watercourses or on the shoreline. The overwhelming majority of the calls were linked to real situations.

Cedre is regularly involved in international assistance missions. In most cases, our colleagues are deployed in the framework of joint missions from UNEP/OCHA (United Nations Environment Programme / United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), but Cedre can also be mobilized abroad by French authorities or, as a member of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, by REMPEC (Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea).

Cedre therefore provided assistance to a number of countries in Europe, Asia and South America. In most cases, the pollutant involved was oil, under the form of light or heavy products. But Cedre's unique expertise as regards response to chemicals spills was also called upon when the ships involved were container ships laden with Hazardous and Noxious Chemicals. In 2021, we also attended a spill of plastic pellets, some of which had melted because of a fire. In another case, fishing gear and bait inside a grounded ship threatened a sensitive ecosystem.

While Cedre's assistance was generally required in case of pollution at sea and on the shoreline, we can be and already were, mobilized in the framework of a spill in inland waters.

When on site, the missions were, again, extremely varied. The first contact was generally made, through the UNEP/OCHA team leader when relevant, at government / Headquarter level. Advice was most often required about response strategies, techniques and equipment, waste management and impact assessment. Tasks then included field visits, direct advice on clean-up sites on onboard ships, meetings with authorities and scientist and the production of written reports.

During any pollution episode, scientific and technical advice has to fit into sometimes complex political, economic and social contexts. Several international missions involved, in addition, a humanitarian component and were carried out in difficult conditions: human casualties, destroyed infrastructure due to act of war or natural disasters, ...

Some of these operations will be presented, with emphasis put on the challenges met in various countries and situations, but also the very interesting lessons learnt during each mission.