ARPEL Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment Manual and Tool

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ABSTRACT

ARPEL (Regional Association of Oil, Gas and Biofuels Sector Companies in Latin America and the Caribbean, www.arpel.org) developed the *"Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment Manual"* and its tool, the *"Readiness Evaluation/Excel Tool for Oil Spills"* with the support of regional and international experts from the petroleum industry and government. This is the first ever international approach to harmonise the assessment of management processes in the area of oil spill response planning and readiness.

The objective is to assist governments and companies in assessing their oil spill response management capabilities in relation to commonly agreed pre-established criteria -determining their true risk- and to ensure their continuous improvement considering best international practices. The criteria are recommended and not mandatory since the Manual does not reflect any specific (i.e., national) legal requirements.

The Tool has specific criteria to assess seven different programs (defined in the Manual) from two perspectives: government and industry, so users can focus their assessment on the oil spill response planning and readiness ability, from geographically and operationally limited facilities up to national and multinational or corporate oil spill response programs. Users can select 3 Levels of assessment; from basic to programs in search for excellence. Once an assessment is completed, the evaluator is provided with relative oil spill response planning and readiness scores in the Level being assessed.

Sources of additional information and references are provided in the Manual to aid personnel tasked to conduct an assessment, as well as those subsequently assigned to fill any gaps found during an assessment.

INTRODUCTION

There have been few attempts in the oil spill response community to prepare comprehensive guides for the assessment of response capability. Most guidance has been focused on the content of oil spill response (OSR) contingency plans. The organizers of the 2008 International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC, www.iosc.org) convened a workgroup to develop general guidance that could be used to assess OSR readiness. The 2008 IOSC Workshop Subcommittee prepared a broad suite of planning and readiness assessment elements to encourage improved response capacity (Taylor et al., 2008). Finally, a document *"Assessment of Oil Spill Response Capabilities: A Proposed International Guide for Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment"* (API, 2008) -hereinafter called "the 2008 IOSC Guideline"- was and

presented in May 2008 at the IOSC. Feedback from the international community deemed desirable to transform the 2008 IOSC Guideline into a more user-friendly management tool.

Encouraged by API (www.api.org), REMPEITC-Caribe (http://cep.unep.org/racrempeitc) and several industry players, ARPEL convened an international group of experts, including IMO, to develop the *"ARPEL Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment Manual"* and its accompanying assessment tool, the "*Readiness Evaluation/Excel Tool for Oil Spills"* (RETOS™ – translates as "challenge" in Spanish). The project was developed in the context of the ARPEL Governance Project funded by CIDA (http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/home) and co-managed with ESAA (www.esaa.org).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL/TOOL?

The Manual and RETOS™ -intended to be used together- aim to assist governments and companies in assessing their level of oil spill response planning and readiness management in relation to commonly agreed pre-established -not legally mandatory- criteria considering international best management practices.

The Manual provides the background for an oil spill response management assessment and explains the terms used and the approach to the assessment process, while RETOS™ contains the checklist and tools for a specific program evaluation.

SELECTING THE SCOPE TO BE ASSESSED

Government and Industry Users can select the Scope of the OSR programs to be assessed. The Manual defines 7 Scopes:

- Government or Industry
    1. Facility – (terminal, plant) - geographically and operationally limited
    2. Facility/Asset Operation (i.e. pipelines, vessels, fleet) – geographically extensive
- Government
    3. Port/City/Local – broader in scope than Facilities but geographically-limited
    4. Area (Region, Province, State) – for governments that have defined requirements or needs for planning at sub-national levels, usually defined by administrative or geo-political boundaries
    5. National & Multi-National – for national oil spill response plans and readiness and for bi- or multi-national initiatives
- Industry
    6. Country or Business Line (e.g., Production) – may include multiple facilities or operations directed from an upper management level
    7. Corporate – company-wide (policies, general procedures, and guidelines)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

For each Scope, particular criteria for oil spill response planning and readiness assessment are displayed in tables in the Manual.

RETOS™ is intended as a checklist and tool for a specific program evaluation. RETOS™ is a Microsoft Excel™ tool comprised of a series of spreadsheets. Once a spreadsheet is completed, the evaluator is provided with relative oil spill response planning and readiness scores. Spreadsheets are provided for the seven Scopes and within each Scope the user selects a Level of assessment (Levels 1 through 3).

Assessment Levels do not correspond to Tiers in the OSR planning sense. Rather, an Assessment Level indicates the maturity of that program, so that a Facility (which typically prepares for a Tier 1 response) may be quite well prepared and very capable of mounting a quick and very effective response to a Tier 1 spill. In such a case the Assessment Level 3 would reflect its maturity but for a Tier 1 spill response. Alternatively, a Tier 3 program, such as would be expected at a National Level, may be in the early stages of development and implementation, in which case the assessment would be performed at a Level 1.

Sources of additional information and references for each criterion are provided as a Toolbox in the Manual. Such information provides users with links to specific content in the 2008 IOSC Guideline and to select publicly-available best international practices. These references can aid personnel tasked to conduct an assessment, as well as those subsequently assigned to fill any gaps found during an assessment.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The ARPEL Manual and RETOS™ allow industry and government entities to compare their oil spill preparedness and response capabilities using a standard set of criteria. Users are expected to provide a maximum dissemination of these tools for

implementation by the corresponding governmental entities and/or companies. These tools can, and will, be improved with the comments from expert users worldwide.

ARPEL is already providing the means to consider the evaluation of the Manual and RETOS™ from other experts who have not participated in their development. This review process will foster the interaction of the oil spill response community and assist in the continuous improvement of these tools and, with it, of the oil spill preparedness and response management capabilities of both government and industry.

REFERENCES

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