2.1 FRANCE

In France, chemical dispersion is one response option: dispersants are used when deemed suitable in the given conditions (especially to combat large quantities of oil) and when environmental considerations allow.
In the late 1970s certain administrative regulations were introduced for selecting the dispersants which may be used. This selection method based on efficiency, toxicity and biodegradability measurements was revised in 1989.
Following the major Amoco Cadiz oil spill (1978), for environmental purposes, in order to restrict the use of chemical dispersion in coastal waters, a geographical limit was defined along the French coast. This limit determined on the basis of major spill scenarios (>10,000t). In the 1990s, this limit was revised by Cedre based on more common spill scenarios.
These specifications (product approval and geographical limits) are simply recommendations upon which the French Navy – in charge of operations at sea – bases its decisions.

2.1.1 French Dispersant Approval Regulations (Full information available at www.cedre.fr).

The current approval procedure for dispersants aims to select the most appropriate products and is based on the following standard (AFNOR) laboratory tests, in chronological order: efficiency test, toxicity test and biodegradability test. Cedre is in charge of the approval process and publishes the list of approved products
The efficiency test is conducted with low mixing energy in order to select the most efficient dispersant, able to disperse even in low energy conditions. The toxicity test is conducted on the dispersant alone (1)and compares, on shrimp, the dispersant with a reference toxicant. The biodegradability test is performed on the dispersant alone.
In addition, the national operational stockpiles undergo periodical controls on the dispersant's quality, upon purchase and, thereafter, every 2 years.

2.1.2 French Dispersant Use Regulations

General geographical boundaries have been defined along the coast of France, beyond which the use of dispersants can be considered without major risks for the marine environment. Three boundaries have been defined (2) based on oil spill scenarios of up to 10, 100 and 1000 tonnes, taking into account the dispersion/dilution potential (minimum depth [5, 10 and 20 m], minimum distance from the shore [0.5, 1 and 2.5 NM], tidal current) and local biological factors (presence of sensitive resources). These boundaries have been defined in order to allow operational responders to quickly decide on the use of dispersant, while minimising the environmental risk.
Inside these boundaries, special precautions must be taken when using dispersants: dispersant use may be considered but requires consultation with the relevant bodies (operational and scientific) of the French administration.
In addition to these general limits, for some specific coastal areas such as estuaries, harbours...., specific emergency response plans may define the conditions for dispersant use according to the specific local ecological conditions.

footnote

(1) The approval procedure aims at selecting the most efficient products. However, the more efficient a product *is the more toxic the dispersed oil emulsion will be. The consideration of the toxicity of the dispersed oil would therefore lead to the rejection of the most efficient products. The French approval procedure therefore only considers the intrinsic toxicity of the dispersant itself.*
The toxicity of the dispersed oil is taken into account when dealing with the conditions for dispersant use, either in actual operations or in contingency planning, when indicating where and to what extent dispersants can be used according to the local environmental sensitivity.
(2) 2nd IMO R&D Forum, London 1995, Sensitivity maps: the actual limits for dispersant application and operational limits for dispersant application.