

**THE LESSONS LEARNED WITHIN TOTALFINAELF CO FROM THE ERIKA  
CASUALTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Erika accident is the first one that Totalfina have known. Elf had known another one in 1990, that of Mega Borg, but in different circumstances. So, the experience learned was limited to the follow-up of other accidents and to regularly carried out exercises. But exercises cannot replace the events reality. They help very much, but they have a big difference with reality: the right to make a mistake. In an exercise, the mistake does not lead to consequences. On the contrary, it often is enriching; in the reality, the mistake does not forgive. So, the level of stress undergone by the teams in charge of managing the event is not the same, all the more as for the most of involved people, it is the first time they have lived this situation.

The accidents such as that of the Erika are extremely few, but however, they can happen again without warning. So, it is very important to learn lessons of such an event:

- What did we do wrong?
- What did we do well?
- What did not we do and what should we have done ?

Of course, it always is easier to answer to those questions with detachment than to make decisions when the accident happens.

So, the suggested report will deal with the following subjects:

1. The “environment” of the accident :
  - At internal level TotalFinaElf : merger period...
  - At external level to TotalFinaElf : very bad weather conditions; the approach of the Y2K bug ; the absence of an important accident for 20 years...
2. The lack of assessment of the importance of the accident from most of concerned people, which led to a delay in the reaction.
3. The reaction and the responses from the public authorities and from TotalFinaElf.

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4. The public's reaction
5. The concept of expertise and of credibility

The measures adopted by TotalFinaElf, about the chartering of ships, the reorganization of contingency planning and the management of the crisis

