

Interspill 2022 – Extended Abstract

International Guidelines and Tools for Assessing Oil Spill Response Planning and Preparedness

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A guide for best practices in the assessment of oil spill response preparedness was presented to the international community over 14 years ago during the 2008 International Oil Spill Conference (IOSC). The published guide, “Assessment of Oil Spill Response Capabilities: A Proposed International Guide for Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment” (IOSC 2008; Taylor et al 2008) was the compiled effort of multiple government and industry stakeholder workshops representing the spill response community. In 2011, the Regional Association of Oil, Gas and Biofuels Sector Companies in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARPEL) developed the “Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment Manual” and its assessment tool, the “Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS™)” with the support of regional and international experts from industry and government, including associations such as the Regional Activity Centre / Regional Marine Pollution, Emergency, Information and Training Centre – Caribe (RAC-REMPEITC-Caribe) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (ARPEL 2014).

The 2008 IOSC Guidelines and the ARPEL Manual and RETOS™ provide a general guide for industry and governments to assess their level of oil spill response (OSR) planning and readiness management in relation to pre-established criteria. RETOS™ is a scalable self-assessment tool that uses a broad suite of planning and readiness assessment criteria broken down into ten different categories to identify gaps in a response program. The free, user-friendly, RETOS™ and its accompanying manual along with the 2008 IOSC Guidelines have been used in over 70 countries to assess the status of oil spill readiness and preparedness for national to local facility spill response programs. The benchmarking evaluation process identifies gaps and opportunities for improvement, priority areas for development, and establishes a baseline against which program improvements and regional, or complementary, response programs can be gauged.

In 2021, ARPEL, IPIECA, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) sponsored a project to update the IOSC 2008 Guidelines to include new information and good practices adopted since 2007, including IPIECA-IOGP good practice guidelines and their related technical support documents, the latest IMO publications, and other relevant documents. The objectives of the project are to issue a new publication on Guidelines for the Assessment of Spill Response Planning and Preparedness and to revise the RETOS™ Manual and the related Microsoft Excel tools into a web-based application format to improve useability. An international Technical Task Force has contributed to updates that expand the guidance and reference sources for improved oil spill response program assessments. This presentation highlights the new assessment guidance and the functionality of the RETOS application.

The new Guideline and the RETOS application are now aligned and are augmented with over 200 references to supporting materials in the ten overall assessment categories. RETOS™ adapts evaluation criteria according to the type of OSR program to be assessed.

- Seven different scopes from two perspectives (government and industry) are considered, including facilities, companies' business lines, and government national programs.
- For each scope there are three possible assessment levels (basic, intermediate, advanced) for which OSR planning and readiness assessment criteria become increasingly more demanding.
- Each level contains criteria in 10 different categories (topic areas), encompassing:
 - A. Legislation, Regulations & Agreements
 - B. Oil Spill Contingency Planning
 - C. Response Coordination
 - D. Health, Safety & Security
 - E. Operational Response
 - F. Tracking, Assessment, and Information Management
 - G. Logistics
 - H. Financial and Administrative Considerations
 - I. Training & Exercises
 - J. Sustainability & Improvement

The new web-based application will be officially launched in 2022. This application allows a secured web-based access to the RETOS solution that promotes concurrent collaboration between multiple stakeholders. It is also designed to simultaneously manage multiple sites in a single web platform. This RETOS web app promotes better security for program evaluation data, allows users to give access to the right people, and provides a clear mechanism to track the OSR program's progress in real-time. With this new tool, it is now easier to launch a new OSR program, conduct a global performance analysis, and build a project-specific global improvement program.

Where these tools have been used on a regional scale, specific national program gaps have been compiled and analyzed regionally (REMPEC 2019; REMPEITC 2017). These types of analyses help to drive IMO activities to address regional gaps and areas for improvement, highlight specific areas for bi-lateral and multi-lateral mutual aid agreements, and can provide regional solutions to national problems, such as creating and maintaining a database of oil spill equipment and experts available in the countries of the region.