

	<p>HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR</p> <p>Ministry for Health & Environment Joshua Hassan House Secretary's Lane Gibraltar</p>	<p>GIBRALTAR PORT AUTHORITY</p> <p>PORT OFFICE North Mole Gibraltar</p> <p>Tel: (350) 200 46254</p>
---	--	--

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

No: 370/2012

Date: 11th June 2012

Oil spill response

An oil spill was reported off the North Mole on Friday evening at approximately 7pm.

Immediately on receipt of this information, the Gibraltar Port Authority (GPA) in conjunction with the Department of the Environment (DOE) initiated the Gibraltar Oil Spill Contingency Plan. Operations to contain the spill continued until 3am on Saturday morning and resumed at 8am. By Saturday afternoon the spill had been mostly contained to several points inside and adjacent to the harbour.

The Oil Spill Contingency Plan mobilisation that was carried out included assets from various sectors, including port operators together the GPA, Gibraltar Maritime Authority (GMA), DOE, the Gibraltar Tourist Board and the Environment Agency.

Throughout the operation, environmental mitigation was given high priority. To this effect the priorities were:

- 1) Collection;
- 2) Containment; and
- 3) As a last resort, the use of oil dispersant. A small amount of dispersant was used in the northern corner of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) adjacent to the Spanish breakwater. Arrival of oil at Western Beach was therefore prevented.

Additionally the GPA made it clear to operators that all recovered oil or soiled materials had to be returned for proper disposal through the Port; the aim being to ensure environmental compliance and an audited trail of waste management and disposal.

At one point, the slick was heading southwards along the exterior of the South Mole and no effort was spared to protect the northern approach to the Southern Waters of Gibraltar Special Area of Conservation and to the beaches in the area.

Priorities for Sunday were the cleanup of the berth for the Moroccan ferry; a staged approach releasing vessels from the detached mole which had moderate soiling, and continuing oil recovery.

A number of areas with tar balls were identified and tackled during the course of Sunday.

A certain amount of cleaning to the harbour walls will be required in the coming days.

Contact was made on Friday night with the Port Authority of Algeciras and La Linea, whose offer of assistance on Saturday and Sunday was accepted. One oil response vessel from Algeciras was on hand just north of BGTW and a Spanish helicopter assisted, at Gibraltar's request, by supplying aerial photographs which helped to determine the location and extent of the oil. There was full co-operation between Gibraltar and Algeciras ports throughout. This reality is completely contrary to the inaccurate and unhelpful statements made by Spanish mayor Jose Ignacio Landaluce who claimed offers of help had been rejected.

The source of the oil was determined as a bunkering accident which is being investigated and followed up with the relevant parties.

The Government wishes to thank all involved in tackling the spill, especially Port and Environment officials who showed great dedication to the task and managed to control what could have been a much worse situation.

It is also grateful to the Algeciras and La Linea Port Authority for the assistance given. Real cross border co-operation between EU neighbour nations in such matters is crucial in ensuring the important marine environment of the region is preserved.

Government will now be considering lessons learnt in order to improve procedures even further to both prevent and deal with oil spills and liability for them.