
Oil Spill Incident Command: Escalated Response Leadership Course

9 – 20 November 2026
Vienna





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Programme Summary

Oil spill incident command for escalated marine spills is the subject of this two-week training course for senior response managers and on-scene commanders at advanced level, culminating in an incident command playbook for a Tier 2 or Tier 3 spill. When a release outgrows local capability, outcomes depend on how quickly command is stood up, how agencies are coordinated and how carefully costs are recorded. The approach moves from command principles to planning cycles, strategy, operations oversight, stakeholders, claims and demobilisation. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in oil spill incident command.

The Business Case

Escalated spills draw in authorities, shipowners, insurers, response organisations, communities and the media within hours. Without disciplined command, effort is duplicated, workforces face avoidable hazards, public confidence erodes and much of the response cost cannot be recovered.

- Recoverable Response Cost: Rises as expenditure is authorised, documented and linked to admissible claim categories.
- Workforce Safety Performance: Improves as site safety plans and supervision scale with the response.
- Stakeholder and Regulatory Confidence: Strengthens as decisions, objectives and progress are communicated on a set rhythm.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Incident Command System ICS and the IPIECA-IOPG Incident Management System guidance: Command and section functions structure the team built in Sessions 1 to 3.
- OPRC Convention and Tiered Preparedness and Response: International co-operation duties and the Tier 2 and Tier 3 escalation model frame resource mobilisation in Session 5.
- Spill Impact Mitigation Assessment SIMA: Comparing the net environmental benefit of response options drives strategy selection in Session 4.
- Civil Liability Convention, Fund Convention and the IOPC Funds Claims Manual: The international compensation regime shapes cost recording and claims preparation in Session 8.



Intended Participants

- Leaders who would act as on-scene commander or incident commander for an escalated spill.
- Senior managers who head planning, operations, logistics or finance sections of an incident management team.
- Authority officials who direct or oversee response by shipowners, terminal operators and contractors.
- Corporate emergency managers who mobilise regional and international response resources.

The programme serves maritime and port authorities, oil and gas producers, shipping and tanker operators and spill response organisations.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct an incident management team structure scaled to an escalating spill.
2. Participants will be able to lead an incident action planning cycle from objectives to an approved action plan.
3. Participants will be able to justify response strategies for at-sea and shoreline operations using SIMA.
4. Participants will be able to coordinate regional and international resources and multiple agencies under a unified command.
5. Participants will be able to prepare cost records and claims that follow the international compensation regime.
6. Participants will be able to direct demobilisation and a post-incident review that improves future capability.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Principles of Oil Spill Incident Command

What makes command of an escalated spill different from first response?

- Escalation Indicators and the Shift From Tier 1 to Tier 2 and Tier 3
- Incident Command System Principles: Span of Control and Unity of Command
- Roles of the On-Scene Commander and Incident Commander
- Lessons From Major Tanker and Offshore Spill Case Histories
- Command Post Set-Up and Initial Situation Assessment

Day 2: Building the Incident Management Team

Who does what as the response grows?

- Command and General Staff Positions
- Planning, Operations, Logistics and Finance Section Functions
- Unified Command With Authorities and the Responsible Party
- Shift Patterns, Handovers and Fatigue Management



- Position Checklists and Team Mobilisation Lists

Day 3: The Incident Action Planning Cycle

How are objectives turned into a plan for each operational period?

- Operational Period Rhythm and the Planning Meeting Sequence
- Setting SMART Incident Objectives
- Tactics Meeting and Work Assignment Forms
- Situation Reports, Status Boards and Common Operating Picture
- Approving and Briefing the Incident Action Plan

Day 4: Response Strategy and Environmental Trade-Offs

Which combination of techniques gives the best net outcome?

- Aerial Surveillance, Trajectory Modelling and Slick Assessment
- At-Sea Containment, Recovery and Dispersant Strategy Decisions
- In-Situ Burning Feasibility and Air Quality Monitoring
- SIMA Analysis of Competing Response Options
- Strategy Revision as Oil Weathers and Conditions Change

Day 5: Mobilising Tier 2 and Tier 3 Resources

How are external resources requested, received and controlled?

- Regional Mutual Aid and Response Organisation Call-Out Procedures
- International Assistance Requests Under the OPRC Convention
- Customs, Immigration and Equipment Import Facilitation
- Staging Areas, Forward Bases and Logistics Tracking
- Vessel, Aircraft and Equipment Tasking Through the Operations Section

Day 6: Shoreline, Wildlife and Waste Operations

How are large onshore operations supervised and kept on track?

- SCAT Survey Coordination and Shoreline Treatment Recommendations
- Segment Sign-Off and End-Point Criteria
- Oiled Wildlife Response Organisation and Welfare Standards
- Waste Streams, Temporary Storage and Final Disposal Logistics
- Supervising Contractors and Volunteer Workforces



Day 7: Health, Safety and Workforce Welfare

How is a large, changing workforce kept safe?

- Site Safety Plans and Hazard Assessment by Work Area
- Exposure Monitoring, Heat Stress and Protective Equipment
- Medical Support, Accident Reporting and Investigation
- Security of Sites, Accommodation and Transport
- Safety Officer Authority and Stop-Work Decisions

Day 8: Costs, Claims and Compensation

How are response costs recorded and recovered?

- Finance Section Set-Up and Expenditure Authorisation
- Daily Cost Capture and Resource Time Records
- Civil Liability and Fund Conventions: Scope and Limits
- Admissible Claim Categories Under the IOPC Funds Claims Manual
- Liaison With Shipowners, Insurers and Technical Advisers

Day 9: Stakeholders, Media and Public Information

How is trust maintained while the response continues?

- Stakeholder Mapping for Fisheries, Tourism and Communities
- Joint Information Centre Set-Up and Media Briefing Rhythm
- Spokesperson Preparation and Message Approval
- Briefing Ministers, Boards and Senior Officials
- Social Media Monitoring and Rumour Management

Day 10: Applying Oil Spill Incident Command

Can the incident management team run a full escalated response?

- Running the Day 3 Planning Cycle in a Multi-Day Simulation
- Testing Day 5 Mobilisation Against a Tier 3 Scenario
- Applying Day 8 Cost Records to a Mock Claim Submission
- Demobilisation Planning and Post-Incident Review Method
- Incident Command Playbook Completion



Methodology

The programme relies on simulation. Participants form an incident management team for a tanker spill that escalates to international response, rotating through command and section roles, with cases from offshore production, shipping and port authorities.

- Suggested activity: Writing incident objectives and an action plan for the next operational period.
- Suggested activity: Comparing response options for a mixed coastline using SIMA.
- Suggested activity: Holding a mock media briefing during an escalation.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes an incident command playbook for an escalated spill. It sets team structure, planning templates, mobilisation routes, strategy criteria, safety arrangements, claims procedures, stakeholder protocols and demobilisation steps, and is used to align partners before an incident.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is oil spill incident command training suitable for managers new to commanding large spills?

Yes. It is set at advanced level and assumes experience of oil spill response or emergency management, but not of commanding a Tier 2 or Tier 3 incident.

Which frameworks does oil spill incident command training rest on?

It rests on the Incident Command System, IPIECA-IOGP incident management guidance, the OPRC Convention, SIMA and the international compensation regime under the Civil Liability and Fund Conventions.

How is the playbook from oil spill incident command training used at work?

You can use it to agree command arrangements with partners, train team members and guide decisions during a real escalated spill.

How does oil spill incident command differ from facility spill planning and first response?

Facility planning covers local preparedness and the first hours. Incident command covers directing multi-agency responses over days or weeks, including claims and demobilisation.