

Editorial

Marine Oil Spills 2018

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Major oil spills can attract the attention of the public and the media. In past years, this attention had created a global awareness of the risks of oil spills and the damage they do to the environment. In recent years, major spill incidents have been fewer in number; still, the public is aware of very major spills, but generally is unaware that spills are a daily fact of life.

Oil is a necessity in our industrial society and a major element of our lifestyle. Most of the energy used in much of the developed world is for transportation which runs on oil and petroleum products. According to trends in energy usage, this is not likely to decrease much in the future. Industry uses oil and petroleum derivatives to manufacture such vital products as plastics, fertilizers, and chemical feedstocks, which will still be required in the future. In fact, the production and consumption of oil and petroleum products is increasing worldwide, and the risk of oil pollution is increasing accordingly. The movement of petroleum from oil fields to the consumer involves as many as 10 to 15 transfers between many different modes of transportation, including tankers, pipelines, railcars, and tank trucks. Oil is stored at transfer points and at terminals and refineries along the route. Accidents can happen during any of these transportation steps or storage times. Fortunately, in the past few years, the actual number of spills has decreased, but oil spills will still continue to form part of our industrial fabric.

Obviously, an important part of protecting the environment is ensuring that there are as few spills as possible. Both government and industry are working to reduce the risk of oil spills, with the introduction of strict new legislation and stringent operating codes. Industry has invoked new operating and maintenance procedures to reduce accidents that lead to spills. Intensive training programs have been developed to reduce the potential for human error.

Oil spills necessitate a multiplicity of talents to deal with them and a multiplicity of disciplines to study and research them. This special edition provides a glimpse into these multiple facets of oil spills. Topics include oil spill modeling, risk analysis and preparation for oil spills. We hope that this special edition will be helpful and enlightening to those in the ever-changing and advancing field of oil spills.

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