

Oilex and HNS Exercise test marine pollution responses (with photos)

Two annual marine pollution response joint exercises, this year code-named Oilex 2017 and the Maritime Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) Exercise 2017, were held simultaneously this morning (October 27) off Lamma Island to test marine pollution responses of government departments in the event of pollution caused by oil spillage and the spread of HNS in Hong Kong waters.

In the test scenario, an oil tanker collided with a container vessel. The fuel oil carried by the tanker was found leaking and four containers loaded with aminoethylethanolamine solution (98 per cent concentration) had fallen from the container vessel into the sea. The four containers drifted in the vicinity of the incident and leaked around 100 tonnes of aminoethylethanolamine solution. During the joint exercises, a response group was tasked to contain and clean up the spilled oil and chemicals, which might pose threats to the nearby environment and facilities.

In the wake of the simulated oil spill, the tanker anchored at Ha Mei Wan at Lamma Island, and a salvage team transferred the fuel oil from the damaged tank and patched up the leakage so as to stop further oil spillage at source. An oil combat team deployed floating barrier booms to encircle the tanker and set up barrier booms near the tanker to prevent the spill from spreading. The exercise also demonstrated a simulation of spraying oil dispersant with seawater from pollution control vessels and a Government Flying Service (GFS) helicopter onto oil on the sea surface, as well as the use of oil skimmers and other equipment. Simultaneously, a shoreline cleaning team conducted a shoreline oil clean-up drill at Tit Sha Long Beach on Lamma Island.

In combating the simulated HNS spill, the response group lifted the damaged containers out of the sea as soon as possible, and sprayed seawater on the sea surface to simulate expediting the dilution of aminoethylethanolamine solution.

The oil spill response exercise for testing the Maritime Oil Spill Response Plan was co-ordinated by the Marine Department (MD), with the participation of other relevant government departments, including the Civil Aid Service, the GFS and the Hong Kong Police Force. Several oil companies and Hong Kong Response Limited also took part in the exercise.

On the other hand, the HNS spill response exercise for testing the Maritime

Hazardous and Noxious Substances Spill Response Plan was co-organised by the MD and the Environmental Protection Department, with participation from government departments including the Fire Services Department, the Government Laboratory and the Hong Kong Police Force.

The exercises provided hands-on experience for relevant departments to adopt an emergency response strategy to prevent pollution according to the properties and scale of the substances spilled.





