
WILDLIFE RESPONSE

34.1 Introduction

.1 This chapter provides operating guidelines which could be considered by those Contracting Parties which under given circumstances of an oil spill incident would seek the assistance of wildlife response experts, expert groups or special equipment from abroad, from other Contracting Parties. In most countries the expertise lies with Non Governmental Organisations and therefore due consideration should be given to the optimal integration of these foreign resources into the national response organisation.

.2 Although this chapter is focusing on wildlife response in the aftermath of an oil spill, the same principles would apply if a wildlife problem was caused by e.g. HNS or an algal bloom.

.3 Part 1 of this chapter provides a set of guidelines and principles that will facilitate the integration of foreign wildlife response experts or teams in a national response organisation.

.4 Part 2 highlights the lines in respectively PolInf and PolFAC that can be used for an international alert or request for oiled wildlife response.

.5 Part 3 provides a set of guidelines for the development of national oiled wildlife response plans that would support the international mobilisation of expertise from abroad.

Part 1: General principles and guidelines for the integration of foreign expertise into a national oiled wildlife response

33.2 General principles

General principles of good practice with regard to oiled wildlife response include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring health and safety of responders and the general public are always first priority of response
- Objectives and strategy are clearly defined at the start of the response by being an organic part of pre-spill planning
- National legislation applies at all times
- Foreign response groups can only work under licence and supervision provided by national authorities
- Foreign response groups require an official invitation by the competent national authorities
- Criteria and procedures for euthanasia and release, that are indicated also in the oiled wildlife response plan, are set by national authorities and can only be applied under their supervision
- Activities always aim at meeting highest standards of animal welfare. Rehabilitation is only conducted if adequate set up can be provided, with reasonable expectation of minimised suffering and maximised post-release survival of treated animals. Euthanasia is included as a means of diminishing suffering and to replace rehabilitation where needed.
- It is clearly defined how the contributions (if any) of response groups and volunteers will be integrated into the response activity, and how these contributions will be coordinated and controlled.

33.3 Health and safety standards

Foreign response groups and volunteers will have to comply with the standards for health and safety and environment (HSE) of the Requesting Party. These standards will be made available to invited groups in a communicable format, e.g. translated into English if possible. HSE issues that should be considered in connection with an oiled wildlife response are explained in the box below.

Box: HSE issues to be considered for oiled wildlife response in the Bonn Agreement area

Oiled wildlife responders typically are face two category of HSE issues while responding to oiled wildlife:

1. HSE issues related to working in an oil polluted environment
2. HSE issues related to working with oiled wildlife both in the field and in facilities

With regard to onshore wildlife response (the collection of live and dead animals), and the specific requirements for dealing with oil pollution, the general HSE standards of oil spill response will apply. This includes protocols and training with regard to

- cautious behaviour in natural hazardous areas,
- the use of adequate personal protective equipment (ppe) when entering and working in polluted zones,
- minimising polluted waste and secondary pollution

With regard to dealing with live oiled animals, additional health and safety standards must apply. These include protocols and training with regard to 5 basic principles (IPIECA, 2004):

- the maintenance of safe working conditions and procedures
- the understanding of occupational health
- an understanding of potential hazards of working with oiled wildlife
- the wearing of adequate personal protective equipment (ppe)
- the practice of good personal hygiene

33.4 Ringing and post release monitoring

An attempt to rehabilitate oiled animals should always be undertaken with the aim of releasing the cleaned and rehabilitated animals with a high probability that they will survive and reproduce as if they had never been oiled. The use of internationally recommended rehabilitation protocols provides a proper basis for this. Nevertheless, the ultimate evidence of the rehabilitation success must come from scientific observations that are made on the breeding colonies. Although the ringing of successfully rehabilitated and released animals is part of international good practice, it is still hard to collect the necessary evidence from field observation programmes that released animals actually have rejoined their natural (breeding) population. Rings that are provided to the rehabilitated birds before their release cannot easily be read at sea or at breeding colonies. Therefore most registered readings come from dead seabirds that have washed ashore some time after their release. This tends to give an unfavourable bias to the perceived success rate of rehabilitation programmes.

The absence of evidence from breeding colonies does not disqualify rehabilitation as a useful approach in oiled wildlife response, but it is clear that more intensive research programmes are needed to allow better scientific assessment of post release survival in relation to rehabilitation methodologies. Possible roads for new research programmes in the field of oiled wildlife response include e.g. the use of colour rings or radiotags for rehabilitated birds, better scientific documentation of the development and use of rehabilitation methodologies and more structured reporting of ring observations to rehabilitation centres. Larger incidents in particular provide interesting opportunities for post-release studies. These should be integrated into the response plan, especially into the release protocols. In this way information on the survival of relatively large numbers of rehabilitated birds can be obtained.

Bonn Agreement strongly recommends the ringing or radio tagging of rehabilitated animals according to international standards and encourages research projects and stronger efforts to quantify and document post release survival of rehabilitated animals.

33.5 Customs and border crossing

With regard to wildlife response there are two main areas in which customs and border crossings need to be considered:

- The entrance of invited responders and/or equipment into a country
- The transport of oil affected animals across borders in order to have them rehabilitated in a neighbouring country

The first area is already covered by Chapter 30 of the Bonn Agreement Counter-Pollution Manual.

The international transport of oil-affected animals could be considered under the following circumstances:

- A relatively large incident has affected two or more neighbouring countries. In the coordinated international response the countries in question share their resources and the optimal use of these facilities may require that animals are transported to a facility abroad.
- An oil incident has affected a country with only limited facilities; however, facilities are available in a neighbouring country or state in close proximity to the area affected by oil.

For the transport of animals over distances of up to several hundreds of kilometres protocols and guidelines exist and are best applied in close consultation with experts.

The transport of marine animals normally needs a permit from both the countries in question. Such a permit could be facilitated by an enhanced procedure that can be followed as part of the national response plan and bi- and multilateral agreements between Bonn Agreement countries that have been made in advance.

33.6 Command structure and operational management

Requesting Party provides a clear command structure for oiled wildlife response as an integrated part of the overall oil spill response command structure (see figures 1 and 2 for examples). Assisting Party will be informed about this structure and given a clear role and responsibility as part of that command system.

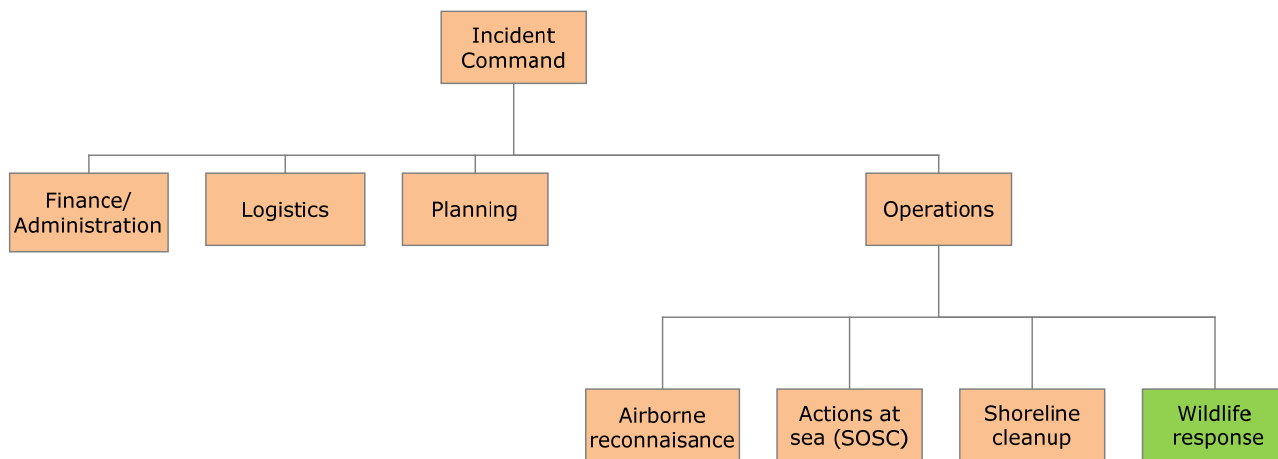


Figure 1: Wildlife response is often integrated into the overall incident command system as part of “Operations”, but the actual organisation structure will differ from country to country.

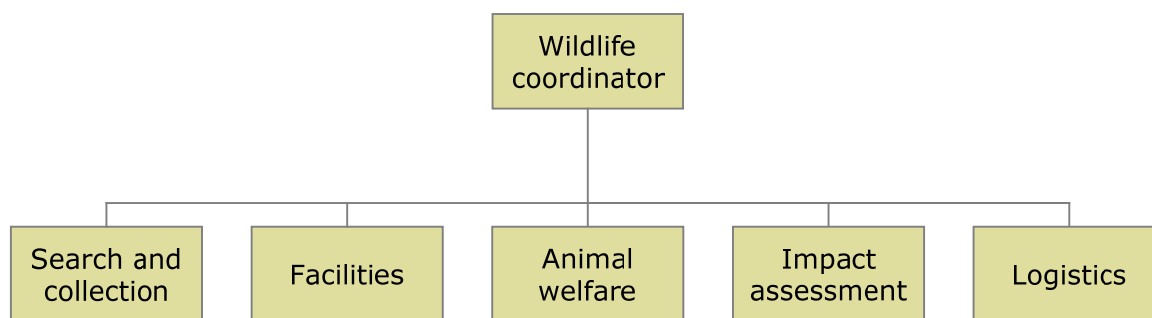


Figure 2: Example of a simple oiled wildlife response organisation chart. The contributions of foreign experts often include the set up and running of a rehabilitation facility, impact assessment, search and collection, and/or management coaching. Other Groups or individuals can be integrated into the organisation chart accordingly.

Assisting Party is expected to have its own command structure, including a mission leader with controlling power over the group. The Assisting Party will provide the names and the affiliation of the experts in the proposed team, as well as their internal command structure, the expertise they provide and their operational needs if integrated into the national response. The mission leader will liaise directly with the national wildlife response coordinator.

33.7 Operational communication with Assisting Party

Assisting Party will be kept informed at all times by the national authorities. Requesting Party provides all means feasible to maximise the contribution that the foreign experts could bring to the success of the national response. Requesting Party identifies a wildlife response centre (WRC) where all relevant information is brought together. Mission leader of Assisting Party will have access to this wildlife response centre and its information.

33.8 Financial aspects

The general rules for reimbursement of costs of assistance are included in Chapter 33 of the Counter-Pollution Manual.

Note: These rules will be applicable also to oiled wildlife response operations and no changes will be needed in the Manual in this respect if the legal basis of the Agreement is extended to deal with oiled wildlife response.

The probability of a successful claim can be maximised if the wildlife response is carried out in an organised and coordinated manner, following an agreed plan, involving trained expertise and applying proven methodologies and acknowledged protocols. The Contracting Parties are recommended to follow the IOPC Fund Claims Manual (pg 23) with regard to the claims of costs of oiled wildlife response.

33.9 Exercises

Oiled wildlife response exercises can be integrated, where applicable, into the existing Bonn Agreement exercise structures described in Chapter 7 of the Manual (BONNEX BRAVO, CHARLIE, DELTA).

Additionally, each Contracting Party is encouraged to invite observers of the other Contracting Parties to participate in their national exercises.

9. International guidelines related and available

Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties jointly recognise and take into consideration the following guidelines and documents that can be applied in preparedness and response in the Bonn Agreement area.

- Guide to Oiled Wildlife Response Planning (IPIECA, 2004)¹
- Handbook on good practices for the rehabilitation of oiled birds in the aftermath of an oil spill incident (Anon. 2007)²
- Handbook on Wildlife Impact Assessment (Anon. 2007)
- Handbook Impact Assessment Seabirds³
- A European Oiled Wildlife Response Plan⁴
- IOPC Funds Claim Manual⁵

¹ www.oiledwildlife.eu

² www.oiledwildlife.eu

³ www.oiledwildlife.eu

⁴ www.oiledwildlife.eu

⁵ www.iopcfunds.org/publications.htm

Part 2: The use of POLREP for oiled wildlife incidents

Lines 53-56 of POLINF should be used as follows:

PART II (POLINF)

- 53. Report on oiled wildlife
- 54. Action taken on oiled wildlife
- 55. Forecast oiling of wildlife
- 56. Evidence taken from oiled wildlife
- 57. Spare
- 59. Spare
- 60. Acknowledge

Lines 88-90 of POLFAC should be used as follows:

PART III (POLFAC)

- 88. Request for wildlife response assistance
- 89. Pre-arrangement for wildlife response assistance
- 90. To where wildlife assistance should be rendered
- 91. Spare
- 98. Spare
- 99. Acknowledge

Part 3: Recommended guidelines for national oiled wildlife response planning

Guidelines on wildlife response planning

The Guideline reflects the recommendations from the Guide to Oiled Wildlife Response Planning (IPIECA, 2004, see References) and the practical experience from planning processes and incident responses in different European countries. Many further backgrounds and details can be found in the IPIECA Guide.

1. WILDLIFE RESPONSE PLANNING

The relevance of an integrated wildlife response plan in place is that objectives, preferred strategies and resources are defined and need not to be negotiated during spill response. This guarantees swift mobilisation of officers and resources. It also provides the best guarantee for the use of appropriate response, rehabilitation and health and safety protocols, efficient use of resources and likelihood of a successful claim to a P&I Club and/or International Oil Pollution Compensations Funds (IOPC Funds) afterwards.

An agreed and published plan is also of great communication value: the details of the plan can be used to explain ongoing activities to the media and to the general public (e.g. via a website).

In developing a plan it should be considered to include a separate section that explains where, when, why and how a decision would be made to call in assistance from abroad. A published English translation or an executive summary would allow the smooth communication with pre-defined international actors and who could use this information to optimize their contribution to the response.

The smooth integration of wildlife responders from abroad into a national or sub-national/local response is facilitated if the wildlife response plan is based on internationally agreed standards of good practice which are familiar to both the local and international responders.

Therefore, the Contracting Parties are recommended to make available and exchange relevant details on wildlife response plans that would facilitate the converging of aims, strategies and methodologies in the Bonn Agreement area, including:

- When was the wildlife response plan established? Date of last update.
- Who is the owner of the plan?
- How is this plan integrated to the existing plan(s) for oil spill response?
- Is an English version or executive summary available (+downloadable)?
- What is/are the main objective (s) of wildlife response?
- What is the agreed strategy of wildlife response?
- Who are the participants in the response plan? Is their contribution formalized?
- Is a tiered response designed?
- How are health, safety and environment (HSE) issues addressed?
- Which human resources are available for operations?
- Which technical resources are in place?
- How is the plan maintained, trained, exercised and improved?

2. AIMS OF A WILDLIFE RESPONSE

The wildlife response should aim to:

- prevent, minimize and assess impacts on wildlife populations,
- prevent the continued suffering of individual oiled animals,

- where applicable ensure the coordinated involvement of responders from government, private sector, NGOs and/or volunteers from the general public with due attention to HSE procedures.

3. MINIMUM STANDARDS

A wildlife response plan should always be based on achieving at least the minimum standards of good practice. There are various issues that require attention in this respect, which are briefly discussed below:

1. Health, safety and environment standards
2. Animal welfare standards
3. Rehabilitation protocols
4. Requirements for equipment
5. Wildlife impact assessment and post release survival monitoring

1. Health, safety and environment standards

Wildlife response should be carried out according to the same HSE standards that are applicable for oil spill response. This includes issues such as requirements for personal protection equipment, risk analysis, waste management. In addition, health and safety requirements must be put in place for working with wild animals. Various publications provide guidance on this topic (see References).

2. Animal welfare standards

Animal welfare standards may differ between countries and different legal requirements for dealing with wild and injured animals may apply. A response plan should refer to national or sub-national/local legislation as appropriate and provide clear guidance as how wildlife responders should deal with animals and their welfare.

3. Rehabilitation protocols

If the rehabilitation of oiled animals is attempted protocols must be used that are known to be successful. A wide range of protocols have been developed by organisations that deal with oiled animals on a regular basis. Organisations that have a record of responding to oiled wildlife incidents internationally and often together, have developed a joint methodology which reflects the crucial elements of the most successful protocols. This methodology must be used as it represents the minimum standards mentioned above as well as the present best practice.

Although rehabilitation protocols are kept by individual organizations and not easily available, increasingly training courses are being provided. A recent European initiative (EMPOWER – European Management Programme for Oiled Wildlife and other marine wildlife Emergency Responses, see www.oiledwildlife.eu) aims to enhance the use and development of best practices and supports the development of expertise in the European coastal countries.

4. Requirements for equipment

A set of basic equipment needs to be readily available as part of the response planning and preparedness. If equipment is not available from permanent response centers, the development of mobile equipment or mobile units should be considered. Alternatively such units may exist in neighbouring countries and could be made available in case of an emergency.

5. Wildlife impact assessment and post release survival monitoring

Systematic scientific data gathering during and after a wildlife response is necessary to allow a reliable assessment of impact. Applying internationally agreed guidelines for wildlife impact assessment (Handbook Oil Spill Impact Assessment) will maximize the value of these scientific efforts in an international context,

where it is important to monitor the status of vulnerable populations and to explain significant changes in their development and survival.

Also of scientific importance is the systematic study of the survival of cleaned and rehabilitated animals after their release. This requires an intensified and concerted international effort to report on the presence, behaviour and breeding success of these animals on the breeding colonies. Such studies should be laid down in the wildlife response plan as an inextricable element of oiled wildlife rehabilitation and be designed and coordinated at an international level.

4. RESPONSE OPTIONS

A number of response activities may be considered in order to achieve the aims of wildlife response (see table).

Aim	Actions that can be considered	What is "best practice"?	Handbooks and Guidelines that provide guidance
Prevent and minimise impacts on wildlife populations	Oil combat at sea	Oil spill response plan Availability of vulnerability maps that include (seasonal) distribution of vulnerable wildlife at sea Pre-identified biologists who could assist in aerial surveillance and the interpretation of real-time field data	Handbook Wildlife Impact Assessment ⁶ ; Guide to Oiled Wildlife Response Planning, IPIECA 2004 ⁷
	Protect sensitive areas (booming off)	Availability of vulnerability maps that include (seasonal) distribution of vulnerable wildlife in coastal areas	Handbook Wildlife Impact Assessment
	Deterrence and hazing	Have predefined plans in place with reference to effective methods per species	North American handbooks
	Pre-emptive capture	Having predefined plans in place, which include directions for the treatment and fate of captured animals	Case studies in literature
Prevent the continued suffering of individual oiled animals	(Live animals) capture, clean, rehabilitate and release	Systematically search beaches Operate rehabilitation facilities Operate internationally approved methodologies/protocols Apply agreed triage criteria Banding of animals that are ready to be released Apply post release monitoring research	Handbook on good practice oiled wildlife rehabilitation ⁸ ; Guide to oiled wildlife response planning
	(Live animals) capture, euthanise humanely	Systematically search beaches Operate euthanasia facilities Have agreed euthanasia techniques	Handbook on good practice oiled wildlife rehabilitation Guide to oiled wildlife response planning
Assess impacts on wildlife populations	(Dead animals) collect, administrate mortality per species	Systematically search beaches	Handbook Wildlife Impact Assessment
Coordinated involvement of multiple stakeholders, including NGO's and volunteers	Operate a pre-spill defined plan Have formal agreements in place Provide for a clear, integrated command	Develop and agree an OWR plan before the incident, involving all responders Have the plan trained and exercised regularly	Guide to oiled wildlife response planning Examples from various countries in Europe, incl. in HELCOM area

⁶ www.oiledwildlife.eu

⁷ www.ipieca.org

⁸ www.oiledwildlife.eu

	structure		
Health, Safety and Environment	Health and safety of responders at all times as a matter of highest priority Minimize polluted waste and avoid secondary pollution	No wildlife response if health and safety of the responders cannot be guaranteed Require a minimum level of training from all accredited responders Volunteers being instructed and supervised Provide protective clothing	Guide to oiled wildlife response planning Examples from various countries in Europe, incl. in HELCOM area

5. STRATEGY

The strategy of a plan specifies how the described aims will be achieved under various scenarios.

In certain cases the agreed aims and principles of a wildlife response plan may require a strategic area-specific and/or season-specific elaboration, in order to deal with the variable conditions and circumstances in different parts of the country, such as the delegated responsibilities of sub-national administrations, relative remoteness (lack of resources) of some parts of the country, area complexity, season-dependent distribution patterns of vulnerable wildlife or seasonal variations in sea and weather conditions.

6. INTEGRATED PLANNING AND COMMAND STRUCTURE

A wildlife response plan should be integrated with an existing appropriate oil spill response plan. The structure and contents of existing contingency plans may differ strongly from country to country or even within a single country and it needs to be considered how this integration is best structured. For example, in a standard oil industry set up, wildlife response comes in under “Operations” (see figure 1).

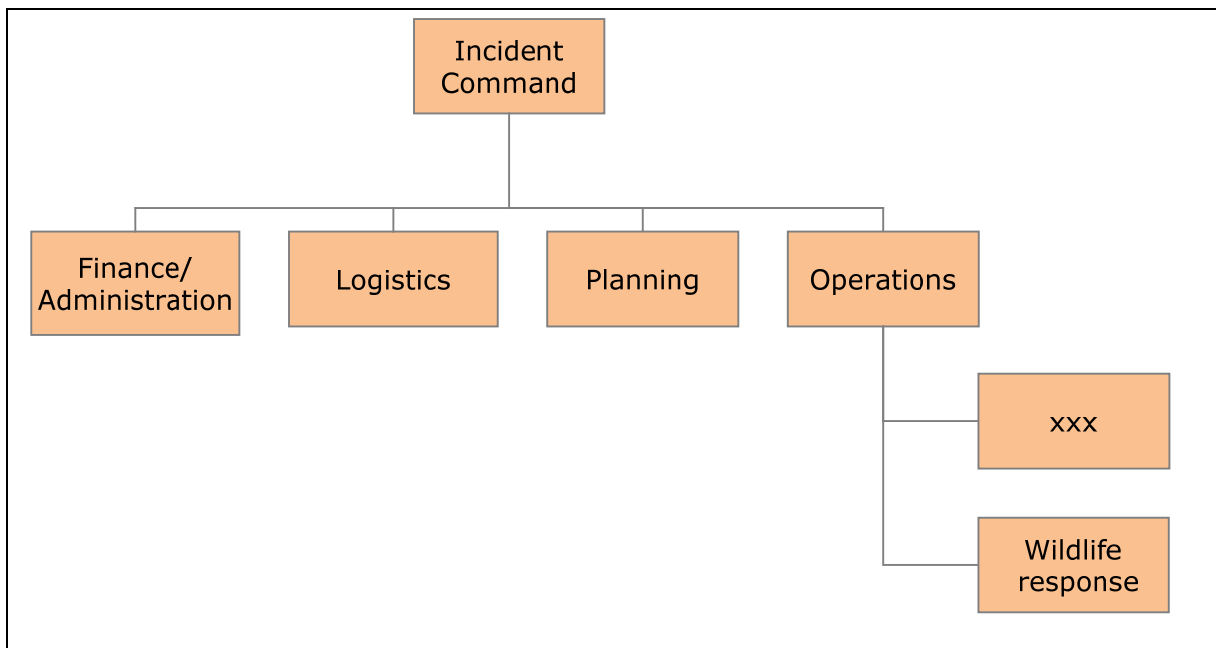


Figure 1: Wildlife response is often integrated into the overall incident command system as part of “Operations”, but the actual organisation structure will differ from country to country.

Also the wildlife response command chain can be structured in different ways. A useful approach that could be considered is to identify a wildlife coordinator who oversees all different aspects of the wildlife response, each of which could be coordinated by a separate officer (see figure 2) in case of a larger incident. In such a

case, the wildlife coordinator should work from, or be represented in the Incident Command Centre, where all real time information comes together and from where decisions are taken.

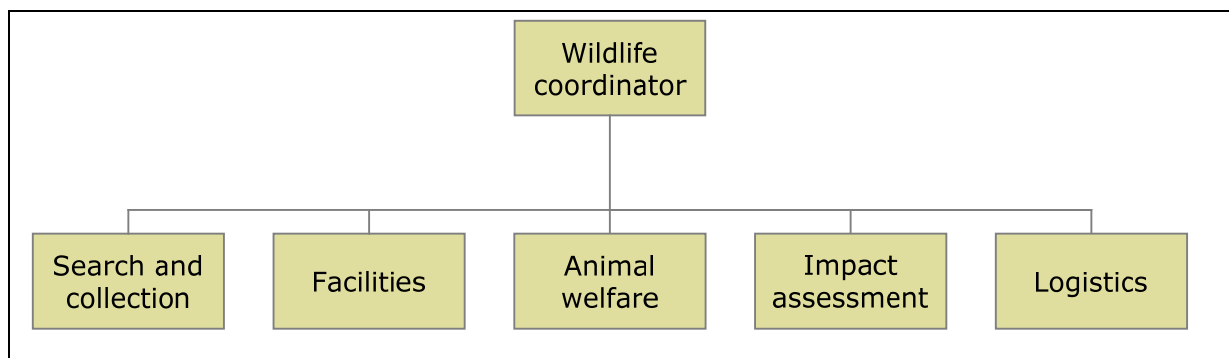


Figure 2: Example of a simple oiled wildlife response organisation chart. The contributions of foreign experts often include the set up and running of a rehabilitation facility, impact assessment, search and collection, and/or overall coaching. Groups or individual experts can be integrated into the organisation chart accordingly.

Although the function of the wildlife coordinator is best taken by an authority official, the roles of other coordinators could be taken by officers from groups and organisations that are formally part of the wildlife response plan. The roles and tasks of each coordinator are described in the operational section of the plan. The roles and responsibilities of organisations (governmental institutions, NGOs, industry bodies, private organisations and others) are best described in the strategy section of the plan, eventually following separate bilateral agreements.

One of the most important and difficult aspects of managing a wildlife response successfully is keeping oversight of day to day developments in relation to the set objectives of the response plan and plan and manage the activities accordingly. The individuals with key responsibilities should be trained to their job. Such training is available via international resources. In case of a worst case scenario developing, experienced individuals from international organisations can provide onsite management assistance.

7. TIERED RESPONSE

Relatively small incidents are easier to deal with at a national level than large and complicated incidents. Contracting States should make an assessment of the limits of national capacity in relation to different incident scenarios. The Tiered Response concept is suitable for this, where Tier 1 is local response, Tier 2 a national response eventually involving ad-hoc assistance from neighboring countries and Tier 3 an international response requiring involvement of resources that are available from abroad (see figure 3).

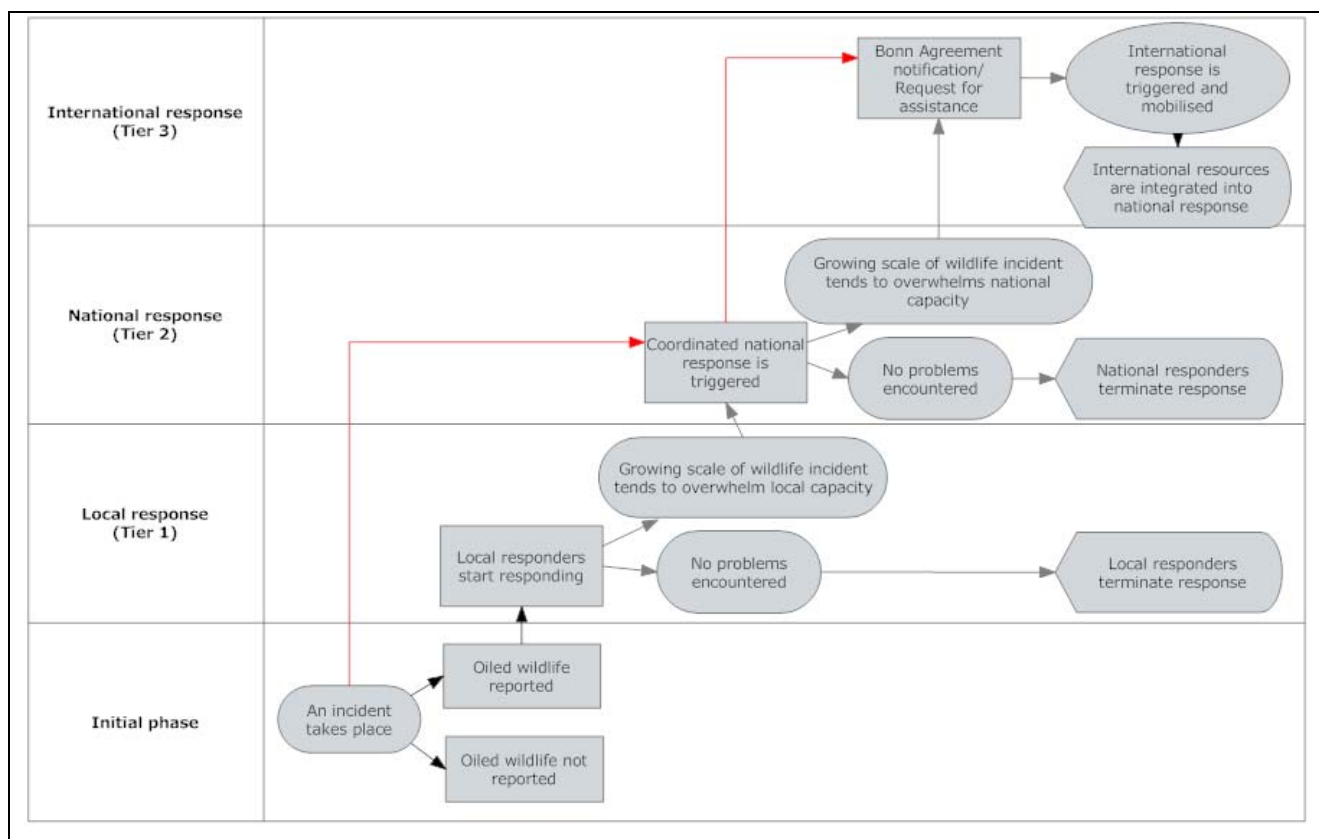


Figure 3: An illustration of the tiered response. In the response plan the capacity limits of each response tier should be clearly described, as well as the decision making process that facilitates the escalation into a next tier. The red arrows indicate that short-cuts should allow an immediate mobilisation of a Tier-2 or Tier-3 response, on the basis of a developing worst case scenario.

It is important for countries to evaluate at which incident scale the national capacity would be overwhelmed, e.g. by the number of involved wildlife or the complexity of the incident. As soon as these capacity limits are being approached in a real-time scenario, the response should escalate from a Tier-2 into Tier-3 scenario. Furthermore, Contracting States should list in advance which resources would be required from abroad in a Tier-3 response, and from where these resources can be invited. This would include e.g. response management assistance, animal care assistance, mobile response units and/or specialised equipment. They should be prepared to cover the costs of mobilised resources from abroad, according to the Bonn Agreement arrangements for international assistance. It should be borne in mind that international compensation regimes include wildlife response as one of the issues that can be included in a claim (see the Claims Manual published by the IOPC Fund in 2008⁹). Having operated according to a pre-spill defined plan strongly supports the justification of such a claim.

8. THE INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

The involvement of volunteers has been important in past wildlife responses, reducing the costs of the relatively labour intensive work that is involved. A volunteer can be defined as an individual who desires to assist with the response out of free will and therefore is involved as an unpaid work force and not as an employee.

Health, safety and liability issues must be considered very carefully before involving volunteers in wildlife response activities. The deployment of volunteers in national or state oil pollution response will not always be

⁹ www.iopcfund.org

possible or desirable. If volunteers are to be used their activities must be well planned, coordinated, supervised and fully integrated into the overall oil pollution response. The person or authority responsible for the overall oil pollution response must determine if, where and when volunteers can be deployed and who will be responsible for their planning, coordination and supervision.

Different types of volunteers can be defined:

1. (Employees of) an NGO that offers its assistance as a voluntary body, ready to get involved and taking responsibilities without necessarily a formal contract or a demand for payment.
2. An individual who is affiliated with an NGO such as described under type 1 but having the status of an internal "volunteer". This type of volunteer is often well trained. Although perhaps not full time available, this type of volunteer will be well coordinated by the NGO in question and make an effective contribution to the response.
3. A member of the general public who offers his labour free of charge to the response organisation but is untrained and not affiliated to any organisation.

In the case of types 1 and 2, a considerable workforce can be mobilised if the right NGOs are identified and invited to play a role in the response plan by means of a formalised agreement. As part of this agreement the accredited NGO could be invited to participate in specific training programmes with regard to HSE and management aspects of an oil spill response. Also as part of the agreement, financial compensation may be addressed. In case a claim can be submitted to a compensation mechanism (P&I Club or IOPC Funds), the NGO could submit its own claim or make it part of the national claim. In the latter case the responsible authority may consider compensating the NGO's expenses in advance.

In case of a volunteer of type 3 (member of the general public), the health safety and liability issues are considerable and the involvement of these kinds of volunteers should therefore be considered very carefully. This type of volunteer must not be charged with key responsibilities, but if deployed given simple tasks under supervision after having received basic on-the-spot training. Health and safety risks should be avoided to the widest possible extent and appropriate insurances must be in place. There are examples of NGOs working in close relationship with the authorities using a professional infrastructure for the recruitment, training and supervision of this type of volunteer.

9. FINANCES

Most countries have in place an emergency budget for (marine pollution) emergencies. In the framework of the elaboration of an integrated wildlife response plan it should be considered whether also the costs of a wildlife response and all its possible aspects (see section 4) could be covered by this budget. Especially in large scale spills, these costs tend to be only a small fraction in relation to the total costs of the incident response.

International mechanisms are available that have been set up to compensate for the costs of oil spill response and oil spill damage (e.g. International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, IOPC Fund Conventions, Bunker Convention). Wildlife response is recognized by these mechanisms, and the main requirements for a justifiable claim in this respect are described in the 2008 edition of the Claims Manual of the IOPC Funds.

There are also other situations in which it is still unclear or unlikely that one or more of these international compensation mechanism are applicable to the case and in the end will be ready to receive claims. A wildlife response cannot be postponed until the issues around "who pays the bills?" have been resolved. It is recommended that the possibilities of financing large scale wildlife response during oil pollution events should be examined foreseeing future spills so that even in the more obscure pollution events, a smooth and coordinated wildlife response will be possible.

10. REFERENCES

The following international publications are worth consulting in the preparation of a wildlife response plan:

- Guide to oiled wildlife response planning. IPIECA (2004). Downloadable from www.ipieca.org
- Handbook Oil Impact Assessment. Downloadable from www.oiledwildlife.eu
- Handbook on good practice for the rehabilitation of oiled birds in the aftermath of an oil spill incident. Downloadable from www.oiledwildlife.eu.
- A European Oiled Wildlife Response Plan. Downloadable from www.oiledwildlife.eu.
- Claims Manual (IOPC Funds, 2008). Downloadable from www.iopcfund.org

Most of these documents are available via www.oiledwildlife.eu. This website also provides a myriad of relevant information with regard to wildlife response and preparedness. It also provides access to the activities of EMPOWER.