The countries bordering the North Sea work together within the Bonn Agreement to undertake aerial surveillance using specially equipped aircraft and personnel to detect spills of oil and other harmful substances and enforce international environmental regulations.

Oil spills per category

In 2019, Contracting Parties carried out 4362 hours of National Surveillance Flights and reported the estimated volumes for 65 slicks in the Bonn Agreement area. The figure opposite shows the oil slicks subdivided into different size categories by amount, including spills where volume was not estimated. No spills over 100m³ were reported during 2019, with the largest being 75,2m³. The number of confirmed detections was 32% lower than in 2018. Most slicks were in a size category that did not warrant action to combat them, since they would evaporate, dissolve and disperse naturally.

Information on spills

-36% Number of detections confirmed as mineral oil compared to 2018

Largest reported oil spill

75,2 m³

45 ? Number of "mineral oil" detections from "unknown" sources

4451 -8% Total number of flight hours [National and Tour d'Horizon flights] (% compared to 2018)

65 Number of detections confirmed or observed as mineral oil

100 Number of "other substances" detected

114 ? Number of "unknown" detections

279 Total number of detections

179,66 Total estimated volume of confirmed/observed spills

The Contracting Parties to the Bonn Agreement consider the aerial surveillance data currently available to be too sparse and too diverse to allow for a reliable overall annual estimation of oil inputs in the entire Bonn Agreement area and that such estimates should be interpreted as indicative only.