

ITOPF — An invaluable resource of marine pollution assistance available to Members

Vessels entered with the Club are automatically enrolled with the ITOPF as members (for tankers) or associates (for other vessel types) and can benefit from free access to its comprehensive range of technical services. ITOPF is there to assist and advise in the event of a spill or threat of a spill of oil, chemicals or other substance in the marine environment.

Promoting effective spill response for over 50 years

ITOPF was established in 1968 to administer a voluntary oil spill compensation scheme on behalf of the world's tanker owners. Since then, it has become the world's most respected authority on preparedness and spill response from all types of vessels. Its technical staff have been on-site at over 800 incidents in 100 countries, providing objective and scientific advice on clean-up measures, the effects of pollutants on the surrounding environment and economy as well as compensation. These incidents can involve oil, chemicals and all other cargoes, whether in bulk or packaged, as well as bunker fuel from all types of vessels.

ITOPF functions on a not-for-profit basis, funded by dues from shipowners which are levied according to the type and size of the entered vessel. The Club pays these dues on behalf of its Members entered. For the 2020-2021 policy year, rates of £0.42 per gross ton plus a £20 administration fee per tanker and £0.38 per gross ton for other types of vessel apply.





ITOPF is an important source of pollution knowledge and on-site expertise for ship-source spills

Emergency response

ITOPF's primary service is effective spill response, with an international team of scientists who are available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year to respond to any pollution incidents involving a Club Member's vessel. This service is already included as part of the premium paid by Members. If mobilised on site, ITOPF only charges essential expenses including flights, accommodation and subsistence costs to the Club. No daily consultancy fees are charged by ITOPF unless the vessel is not a member or associate.

When on-site, ITOPF works closely with the Club's representatives, as well as local surveyors and lawyers, government agencies, contractors and other relevant parties to promote an effective and efficient clean-up response.

What is ITOPF's role on-site?

ITOPF's role on site varies according to the circumstances of the incident but is always

advisory. Decisions on the response are made by the relevant authorities, ideally in cooperation with the Club. In this regard, one of ITOPF's primary objective is to ensure cooperation and communication. The advice ITOPF provides is based on technical principles and more than half a century of experience attending spills in a wide range of habitats and socio-economic environments. ITOPF's staff fulfil this role in many ways:

- By advising all parties on the potential fate and effects of the pollutant. Also, by conducting drift trajectory modelling.
- By assisting and advising all parties on the most appropriate clean-up techniques, with the aim of mitigating any damage.
- By helping to organise and monitor the clean-up, in cases where the shipowner is required to mount the response operation, as well as reviewing invoices and claims prior to payment by the Club. In some cases, help is provided to source response equipment and services.
- Undertaking aerial and shoreline surveys, monitoring the clean-up, and advising all parties on the technical merit of response actions.
- Investigating damage to the marine environment and to coastal resources, such as fisheries and aquaculture.
- Advising on methods to mitigate environmental and economic losses, including restoration measures.

Not just major spill response

ITOPF doesn't exclusively attend major incidents. ITOPF staff respond to spills of any size, as the quantity of oil spilled is not always the best indicator of the degree of complexity of the incident response. Factors such as remoteness, shoreline type and the approach taken by the authorities in the affected country can all have a significant bearing on the issues that ITOPF must contend with on site and on the duration of its involvement.

Not just oil spill response

While oil spills carried either as cargo or bunkers remain the most common reason to call on ITOPF's services, ITOPF staff also provide advice on spills of other substances transported by sea. This includes vegetable oils, a wide range of hazardous chemicals and dry bulk cargoes, including coal and wood, and the vast range of raw and manufactured goods and products carried on board containerships.

Sharing of information from the outset

Contacting ITOPF, on their emergency number, at the earliest stage of an incident is strongly recommended. Even in seemingly straightforward cases, Members should consider utilising their experience to assess the situation and run through likely scenarios and potential issues. ITOPF's input on best practice in spill response can prove particularly vital if the local authorities in the country affected have limited experience or knowledge of dealing with pollution incidents. In this regard, it is paramount for Members to gather as much information as possible

regarding the circumstance of the incident.

The [ITOPF 2019 handbook](#) provides a list of essential information to gather in the event of an incident which could greatly assist ITOPF in assessing the full extent of the problem as well as providing the most accurate and meaningful advice.

Remote advice

For cases that may not require a full mobilisation response, ITOPF is ready to provide general advice remotely from its office. The scale of involvement needed in these cases varies from a few hours in straightforward circumstances to several days or even weeks if they are more complex.

Common requests include providing advice on the potential outcome and effects of the pollutant, the resources at risk or the location of response equipment.

However, where there is a possibility that an incident may become complex or an expectation of claims, mobilisation of ITOPF staff to site to provide first-hand advice and observations is preferable.

Claims assessment

ITOPF also plays a role in assessing the fairness of clean-up costs and the merit of claims for damage to the environment and socio-economic resources, such as for property or businesses, including fisheries and mariculture claims. This work is undertaken in accordance with the criteria established internationally and set out in the [IOPC Funds' Claims Manual](#) as well as subsequent guidelines.

Training and education activities

ITOPF also assists with non-incident response activities, including training, drills, exercises and contingency planning assignments. It is a comprehensive source of information on marine pollution across its library, technical publications, films and website. Each year ITOPF publishes statistics from a database of accidental oil spills from tankers, combined carriers and barges which reveal the dramatic and sustained reduction in oil spills from tankers over the decades. In order to facilitate best practice in spill response, ITOPF also supports research and development activities through its annual R&D Award which provides up to £50,000 each year to fund projects that contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced in spill response and environmental monitoring.



ITOPF is available to assist Members with training and planning assignments

Further information on ITOPF is available in the [2019 ITOPF Handbook](#).