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MARINE POLLUTION FROM OIL AND OTHER HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

1 The United Kingdom Government is signatory to an agreement with the Governments of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, relating to co-operation in detecting and dealing with spillages of oil and other hazardous substances in the North Sea and English Channel. The agreement calls for ships and aircraft to report the sighting of oil in these areas.

2 The United Kingdom Government is signatory to the Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response Co-operation Convention (OPRC) 1990 of the International Maritime Organisation. The United Kingdom Government is committed to establishing a reporting format for sightings of oil in their Controlled Waters. (The limits of United Kingdom Controlled Waters are detailed in the map as shown at the Annexe to this Circular). Ships and aircraft are requested to report sightings of suspected pollution in these areas.

3 In addition the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation has recommended that Member States should issue appropriate instructions to ships masters, pilots of aircraft and other persons who may observe, or be involved in the spillages of oil or other harmful substances at sea, anywhere in the world.

4 Pilots of aircraft observing substantial patches of oil or other possible harmful substances on the surface of the sea adjacent to the coast of any country should report the sighting as soon as possible using the procedures set out in the following paragraphs:

4.1 Incidents or sightings in sea areas surrounding the United Kingdom

4.1.1 Pilots of radio equipped aircraft should call the nearest ACC on the frequency the aircraft is already working, or on the appropriate FIS frequency. Reports should be prefixed 'OIL POLLUTION REPORT' or 'POLLUTION REPORT' if a harmful substance other than oil is suspected.

4.1.2 Pilots of non-radio equipped aircraft should, as soon as possible after landing, telephone one of the following authorities:

- (a) The nearest HM Coastguard Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC); or
- (b) the Watch Supervisor at the nearest ACC; or
- (c) any Air Traffic Service Unit.

4.1.3 On receipt of any such reports, ACC or HMCG will immediately inform the Counter Pollution Branch of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency who will initiate clean up and/or prosecution action as deemed necessary.

4.2 Incidents or sightings in areas near any other country

4.2.1 A call should be made to the most convenient ATC authority in that country. Again, reports should be prefixed 'OIL POLLUTION REPORT' or 'POLLUTION REPORT' if a harmful substance other than oil is suspected.

4.2.2 Pollution Reports (POLREPS) should contain as much as possible of the following information in the format below:

- A: **CLASSIFICATION** of report: (i) Doubtful, (ii) Probable, (iii) Confirmed
- B: **DATE and TIME** pollution observed/reported, and identity of aircraft reporting
- C: **POSITION and EXTENT** of pollution
- D: **TIDE, WIND** speed and direction
- E: **WEATHER** conditions
- F: **CHARACTERISTICS** of pollution
- G: **SOURCE and CAUSE** of pollution (eg from a vessel). If possible give name, type, size, nationality and port of registry, or description, including any distinctive markings, also assessment of course and speed of vessel and whether any pollution observed ahead of the discharging ship and the estimated length of pollution in her wake.

H: Details of **VESSELS IN THE AREA**

J: Whether **PHOTOGRAPHS** have been taken

N: **CONTACT NAME** and **TELEPHONE NUMBER** of reporting person.

5 Pilots of aircraft are urged to co-operate to their fullest extent in reporting spills from any source. By doing so, they will be playing an important part in the worldwide efforts to reduce pollution at sea.

This Circular is issued for information, guidance and necessary action.

U.K. Controlled Waters (Prevention of Pollution) Limits

