

Effects of Oil and Chemically Dispersed Oil in the Environment

Health and Environmental Sciences Department

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BACKGROUND ON THIS BOOKLET SERIES

Beginning in 1994, the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC), and later the Marine Preservation Association (MPA), sponsored a study to examine the reasons for the apparent differences between expert and non expert perceptions of dispersant use and the ecological effects of dispersant use. Using a prescribed risk communication methodology, this study compared the mental models (an individual's thought processes in making a decision regarding a particular issue) of US dispersant decision-makers and other stakeholders to an expert model (expert consensus of the relevant decision concepts that might be used), specifically looking at the fate and effect of spilled oil in comparison to chemically-dispersed oil. Through a series of interviews and written questionnaires, a number of dispersant misperceptions were identified. These misperceptions were translated into topics for booklets that would provide dispersant information in a concise and reader-friendly format. For more information on the MSRC/MPA study, please see Bostrom et al., 1995, Bostrom et al., 1997, and Pond et al., 1997.

As a result of the MSRC/MPA work, in 1996, the American Petroleum Institute (API) commissioned the preparation of three dispersant-related booklets:

- Fate of Spilled Oil in Marine Waters: Where Does It Go? What Does It Do? How Do Dispersants Affect It? An Information Booklet for Decision Makers.
- A Decision-Maker's Guide to Dispersants: A Review of the Theory and Operational Requirements.
- Effects of Oil and Chemically Dispersed Oil in the Environment.*

*This booklet is the third in the series. In the previous two booklets it was referenced by a draft title - "Defining the Links Between Fate and Transport Processes with Exposure and Effects of Oil and Chemically Dispersed Oil in the Environment."

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