

PRESS RELEASE

13th October
2008EMSA Assists in Spanish
Oil Recovery Operations

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*In the late evening on Friday 10th October, after two ships ran aground and spilled oil in heavy weather off southern Spain, the Spanish authorities requested the assistance of EMSA. As a result, the EMSA contracted vessel **Bahia Tres**, which is operated by Mureoil and operates in Algeciras Bay, was converted into an oil recovery vessel within hours and put at the disposal of Spanish maritime safety organisation SASEMAR.*

'Although there are hundreds of accidents involving commercial ships in EU waters every year, it is a very unusual situation when two such large vessels run aground and spill oil at the same time,' said EMSA Executive Director Willem de Ruiter. 'I am very happy that EMSA was in a position to offer assistance so quickly on this occasion. This really shows the benefits of our recent build-up of a network of oil pollution response vessels around the EU coastline.'

Background

Due to the heavy weather in the area, the bulk carrier **Fedra** sustained engine failure, dragged anchor and ran aground off Europa Point, Gibraltar, following which it lodged against a cliff and subsequently broke up. Several hours later, the bulk carrier **Tawe** ran aground near the port of Algeciras. Both vessels have limited quantities of bunker fuel on board, and the leakage of oil is putting the environment in the vicinity of the vessels under threat.

Since Sunday 12th October, the EMSA vessel **Bahia Tres** has been involved in locating oil slicks with its onboard oil slick detection system and, more importantly, has been recovering patches of oil and smaller slicks where ever possible. So far, the operation has met with success, and a number of tons of oil have already been recovered, thus reducing the environmental damage caused by the accident.

At the same time, the Agency has been utilising its CleanSeaNet European satellite oil slick detection service, and has offered the Spanish authorities radar satellite images of the affected area for the days when pollution monitoring is required. These satellite images are intended to provide additional information on the location of oil at sea originating from the grounded vessels.

At present, EMSA has 13 stand-by vessels located at different places around the EU coastline, and these are ready to assist any EU Member State that requests their services.

The pollution response vessel network is now being extended to cover additional strategic locations from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

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