



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
"Environmental Protection is Everybody's Business."

Training in Oil Spill Response and Ecological Risk Assessment

With the continued development of the country, and in particular the expansion in the petroleum sector, Belize faces an ever increasing risk of oil spills. Risks are posed to the environment as a result of unintentional leaks and accidental spills during transportation, both on land and in the marine environment. So far, Belize has been fortunate that the spills that have occurred have been relatively small in nature, being less than 1000 gallons. However, with Belize's economic development and the increase in oil production and transport, the possibilities of larger spills become quite real. The reason for concern is because petroleum has the potential to be a highly contaminating substance and therefore must be managed and handled as a hazardous substance.

In order to increase the effectiveness of response to oil spill incidents by the Department of the Environment and the various other agencies that serve as **first responders**, the Department of the Environment has liaised with the International Maritime Organization and the RAC/REMPEITC to hold a "National Oil Spill training" and an "Ecological Risk Assessment for Oil Spills". The training is designed to increase the knowledge of the **first responders** and give hands-on training in the use of the various response equipment. The goal is to have trained national response agencies capable of responding to all oil spills. Lecturers facilitating the training come from the Regional Activity Center/Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Center (RAC/REMPEITC), which was established to implement the Protocol Concerning the Cooperation in Combating Oil Spills in the Wider Caribbean Region, and Clean Caribbean & Americas (CCA), a non-profit U.S. corporation comprising of most of the major international and regional oil companies in the Caribbean and Latin America. Both organizations operate to enhance the capability to promptly and efficiently respond to major marine oil spills in the region.

This training is being held at the Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel in Belize City on January 27 to 29, 2009. Other agencies participating in the training include the Belize National Coast Guard, Belize Port Authority, Belize Defence Force, Fisheries Department, National Fire Service, Police Department, National Emergency Management Organization, Coastal Zone Management Authority, National Meteorological Service, Ministry of Works, Belize Audubon Society, Esso Standard Oil, PetroFuel Belize, Belize Natural Energy, MISSCOL and the Belize Electricity Ltd.

The media is hereby invited to cover this event as there will be an opening ceremony on Tuesday, January 27 commencing at 8:30 am at the Biltmore Hotel, and a field training exercise on Thursday, January 29 commencing at 2:00 pm at the Cucumber Beach Marina on the Western Highway.

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