

# Annex 3 – Communications

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## Communications

### Communication overview

The EOC serves as the communication hub throughout the oil spill response. Information relevant to the response and logistical support will be channelled through it. It can also be the centre where the news media can receive information.

From the commencement of the response activity, all communications between the oil spill scene and the EOC will be by the most appropriate means, but will most likely be by cell phone, telephone or marine VHF. If supporting organisations are employed as part of the response they will use their own communication systems unless directed otherwise by the Incident Command Team (ICT). In the event of a major clean-up operation, the On-Scene Commander (OSC) may designate a suitable local site as a forward communications base. However, it is likely that a spill of this size will be a Tier 3 spill in which case Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) communications equipment will also be available.

The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan outlines the communications systems used within New Zealand that may be utilised during a Tier 3 response. Further guidance can be found in Web EoC. It is important that the Incident Command Team is familiar with the systems, as they may be useful to assist with a Tier 2 response and the ICT may be called upon to assist with a Tier 3 response centred in the Bay of Plenty.

### Communications limitations

It is possible for the cellular phone system to become overloaded in emergencies, due to the high demand placed on the system by the numerous interested parties.

In a major spill, sea, air and land clean-up operations may be taking place concurrently. Therefore, it will probably be necessary to allocate different radio frequencies or communication modes for each operation.

It is likely that a combination of methods, chosen to give the most practical response, will be confirmed 'on the day', as all methods of communication have poor coverage in some coastal areas.

### Initial communications

In the early stages of an oil spill clean-up operation, it is likely that an interim communications base will be established in a Council vehicle fitted with RT, marine VHF and a cellular phone.

## Safety note

Radios, cellular phones, pagers and certain cameras must not be taken on board tankers or into a spill situation where they may ignite vapours. Only intrinsically safe devices may be used.

## Methods of communication

The method of communication used is dependent on the constraints imposed at the site of the spill.

There are several methods of communication available to the Incident Command Team and field personnel. These include:

- Telephone
- Cellular phone
- Council vehicle fitted with Trunk Radios to Council Reception
- Council vehicle fitted with Marine VHF to CD Marine VHF base set

- Council hand held Marine VHF radios
- 15 x hand held VHF radios + chargers (located in CDEM storeroom). These are permanently on charge and are pre-loaded with BOPRC frequencies. They are water and dust proof with up to 350 conventional VHF and UHF channels available. They are text capable and have lone worker emergency rescue alarm functions.

Full specifications are can be found in the following:

**Objective Link (A2546762):** 2017-02-14 Hand-Held Radio Specifications  
[2017-02-14 Hand-Held Radio Specifications](#)

All other supporting agencies will use their own communication networks and utilise VHF channels applicable to their normal operations.

All Department of Conservation (DOC) vehicles and hand-held radios have DOC, Simplex and marine VHF channels installed. The Department of Conservation has a large VHF network with multiple channels/transmitters covering almost all coastal Bay of Plenty areas.

## Marine Radio communications

For a Tier 2 response, the main types of Marine Radio communications will be VHF.

Command/coordination – the following VHF channels are applicable to the Bay of Plenty region.

Radio station	VHF channel
International Calling and Distress	16
Plenty Maritime Radio	16 and 68
Tauranga Port Radio	12, 16
Port Operations	12
Waihi Beach Coastguard	16, 07
Tauranga Coastguard	16, 01
Whakatane Coastguard	16, 61
Opotiki Coastguard	16, 61
Rotorua Lakes Coastguard	16, 2
Ship to Ship	6, 8
Aquatic Events	17, 77

The Communications Coordinator should take these channels into account when allocating VHF channels to the spill event.

## Civil Aviation communications

Methods of Civil Aviation communication include VHF AM, MF/HF Single Side Band and ES Band.

The VHF AM and MF/HF Single-Side Band systems work much the same way as the marine-based systems. The National Rescue Coordination Centre in Lower Hutt is well equipped to communicate with aircraft. The EOC may also be able to link into aircraft through local aircraft control towers.

Almost every airforce plane and most major rescue helicopters are also equipped with Marine VHF radio.

## Mobile phone communication

Much of an oil spill response communication will be carried out using mobile phones for their convenience and portability. It must be recognised that mobile coverage is incomplete in the Bay of Plenty. Figures 2 to 5 show the Spark XT, 2 Degrees and Vodafone coverage for the Bay of Plenty. The web addresses for downloading these maps are as follows:

- <http://www.spark.co.nz/coverage>
- <http://www.2degreesmobile.co.nz/coverage>;
- <http://www.vodafone.co.nz/network/coverage/>; and

In the event of a large spill, it must also be recognised that mobile phone communication may become swamped by the number of users (remember the media will also use mobile phones) and therefore, over reliance on this mode of communication must be avoided.

## National Plan communications

The **National Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan and guidance notes found in Web EoC** outlines the communications system used within New Zealand that may be utilised during a national response. It is important that the Incident Command Team is familiar with the systems, as they may be useful to assist with a Tier 2 response and the EOC Team may be called upon to assist with a Tier 3 response centred in the Bay of Plenty.