

SUMMARY

Since June 3, 1979, thousands of barrels of crude oil have been spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. Daily reports continue to indicate that the well will be capped "soon". In the meantime Texas has lost millions of dollars in tax revenues, lawsuits have been filed and both real and potential damage to the fish and shrimp is largely unknown. The question that arises again and again is, can a spill of this magnitude reoccur? Future spills are entirely possible because of the amount of drilling that is being done. IXTOC I was only one of 18 wells being drilled in the Bay of Campeche. We hope to learn lessons from this tragic waste so we can cope with, or prevent future spills.

Oil spills have disastrous affects on both manmade and natural resources. Damages can be high for inhabitants of coastal areas, on the tourism industry, and on the fishing industry. The National Academy of Sciences divides the natural or ecological impacts into five categories:

- 1 Human hazard from ingesting contaminated food
- 2 Damages to fisheries, seaweed, birds, marine mammals, and other wildlife
- 3 Damages to beaches and other recreational areas
- 4 Damages to the marine ecosystem by eliminating or decreasing populations of certain species
- 5 Modification of habitats³⁰

The damage assessment plan under the auspices of NOAA is still awaiting funding; little work can be done by the federal government until the appropriations are made. It has been suggested that the Texas legislature obtain the necessary appropriations to furnish its own damage assessment program. Studies, whether undertaken by the state or by the federal government, should be built upon existing Texas Coastal research and should utilize available on-site facilities and laboratories. This report has furnished a workable comprehensive oil spill profile by categories and a fish/shrimp species profile, documented baseline data relating to the effects of oil and the reproductive and spawning cycles as well as a regional food web of **commercial fishes, shrimps, crabs, oysters and man.**

The IXTOC I blowout occurred in Mexican waters and Texas has little control of international waters. An international commission utilizing the blowout prevention techniques of the U.S. government and responsible for keeping individuals in the industry apprised of advanced blowout techniques would greatly mitigate the possibility of another blowout.

In the event that a spill should reoccur either from a blowout on a rig, or a tanker collision, better and more immediate means of cleaning the beaches should be initiated. All avenues of cleanup measures should be investigated including the development of cooperatives between the industry and local authorities. Equipment should be made more readily available on a short-notice. Time is vitally important during the initial crisis.

Compensation policies should be carefully reviewed and evaluated so that help can be readily available to those suffering severe damage. Existing federal and state law do not cover the victims of the IXTOC I spill, since the spill occurred outside federal waters.

IXTOC I is the largest oil spill ever recorded. The Coast Guard expended, through February 28, 1980, \$7,612,659.92 in the cleanup effort.

The U.S. Coast Guard, the Regional Response team which includes the Texas Department of Water Resources, and the other state agencies and universities involved in the oil spill response should be commended for their fine efforts. In retrospect, the oil spill has caused much reevaluation of the available procedures, additional prevention measures as well as cleanup techniques that are presently utilized by the state.