

## Incident Management System: An Essential Tool for Oil Spill Response

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**Abstract :** An oil spill emergency can vary in size and complexity, subject to factors such as volume and characteristics of spilled oil, incident location, impacted sensitivities and resources required. A major incident typically involves numerous stakeholders; these include the responsible party, response organisations, government authorities across multiple jurisdictions, local communities, and a spectrum of technical experts. An incident management team will encounter numerous challenges. Factors such as limited access to location, adverse weather, poor communication, and lack of pre-identified resources can impede a response; delays caused by an inefficient response can exacerbate impacts caused to the wider environment, socio-economic and cultural resources. It is essential that all parties work based on defined roles, responsibilities and authority, and ensure the availability of sufficient resources. To promote steadfast coordination and overcome the challenges highlighted, an Incident Management System (IMS) offers an essential tool for oil spill response. It provides clarity in command and control, improves communication and coordination, facilitates the cooperation between stakeholders, and integrates resources committed. Following the preceding discussion, a comprehensive review of existing literature serves to illustrate the application of IMS in oil spill response to overcome common challenges faced in a major-scaled incident. With a primary audience comprising practitioners in mind, this study will discuss key principles of incident management which enables an effective response, along with pitfalls and challenges, particularly, the tension between government and industry; case studies will be used to frame learning and issues consolidated from previous research, and provide the context to link practice with theory. It will also feature the industry approach to incident management which was further crystallized as part of a review by the Joint Industry Project (JIP) established in the wake of the Macondo well control incident. The authors posit that a common IMS which can be adopted across the industry not only enhances response capacity towards a major oil spill incident but is essential to the global preparedness effort.

**Keywords :** command and control, incident management system, oil spill response, response organisation

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