



IMO'S RESPONSE  
TO CURRENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
CHALLENGES  
2007

# OPRC - HNS PROTOCOL

PROTOCOL ON PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND  
CO-ORDINATION TO POLLUTION INCIDENTS BY HAZARDOUS  
AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES, 2000



IMO



INTERNATIONAL  
MARITIME  
ORGANIZATION

# OPRC – HNS PROTOCOL

## PROTOCOL ON PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND CO-ORDINATION TO POLLUTION INCIDENTS BY HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES, 2000

### What is the OPRC-HNS Protocol 2000?

The Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS), 2000 or the OPRC-HNS Protocol, aims to provide a global framework for international co-operation establishing systems for preparedness and response in combating incidents or threats of marine pollution involving HNS at the national, regional and global levels; in improving scientific and technological understanding and knowledge in this field; in promoting technical co-operation in response techniques; and in developing specialized training programmes.

The OPRC-HNS Protocol was adopted to expand the scope of the 1990 International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC Convention 1990), which entered into force on 13 May 1995, to apply, in whole or in part, to pollution incidents by hazardous substances other than oil. The OPRC-HNS Protocol was formally adopted in March 2000 by States already Party to the OPRC Convention and entered into force on 14 June 2007.

### What does the OPRC-HNS Protocol 2000 cover?

Under the OPRC-HNS Protocol 2000, hazardous and noxious substances or HNS are defined as “any substance other than oil which, if introduced into the marine environment, is likely to create hazards to human health, to harm living resources and marine life, to damage amenities or to interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea”, and include:

- Oil derivatives;
- Liquid substances which are noxious or dangerous;
- Liquefied gases;
- Liquids with flashpoints not exceeding 60°C;

- Packaged dangerous, harmful and hazardous materials; and
- Solid bulk material with associated chemical hazards.

The Protocol covers pollution incidents or a threat of a pollution incident from HNS, such as a discharge, release or emission of HNS including those from fire or explosions, which pose or may pose a threat to the marine environment, or coastline, and would, therefore, require emergency action or an immediate response.



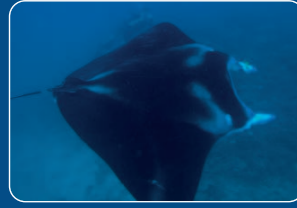
Image courtesy of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency of the United Kingdom

### What are the potential benefits of being a Party to the OPRC-HNS Protocol 2000?

States acceding to the OPRC-HNS Protocol will derive benefits such as:

- Access to an international platform for co-operation and mutual assistance in preparing for and responding to major HNS pollution incidents and a mechanism for establishing co-operative arrangements with other State Parties.
- A means for urgently accessing relevant technical assistance and response resources in the event of an HNS incident.
- A framework for the development of national and regional capacity to prepare for and respond to HNS incidents.





- Participation in a network for the exchange of new research and development information, best practices and practical experiences in HNS response.
- Access to training and support for developing the essential preparedness and response structures and legislation at national and regional levels through IMO's Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme.

Such benefits will contribute to the enhanced protection of a State's coastal zone and marine environment including human health and resources.

## What are the obligations of Parties to the OPRC-HNS Protocol?

States acceding to the OPRC-HNS Protocol must meet certain basic obligations as required under the Protocol, including:

- A national system for responding to HNS, including a designated national authority, a national operational contact point and a national contingency plan. This needs to be backstopped by a minimum level of response equipment, communications plans, regular training and exercises.
- Requiring ships that are entitled to fly its flag to carry a shipboard pollution incident emergency plan and for seaports and offshore units, floating production and related facilities that are within its jurisdiction to also have similar arrangements, which must be coordinated with national systems for responding promptly and effectively to HNS pollution incidents.
- Providing assistance, to the extent possible and feasible, to other States in the event of a pollution emergency, with a provision for the reimbursement of any assistance provided.

States should also try to conclude bilateral or multilateral agreements for preparedness for and

response to pollution incidents. This would act as a 'topping up' mechanism for accessing additional resources over and above what is available at the State level in the event of a pollution incident and for facilitating co-operation with other States, the shipping industry, industries dealing with HNS and other entities.

IMO has developed a wide array of tools, including model training courses, manuals and guidance documents, to assist countries in developing capacity for HNS and meeting their obligations under the Protocol. States may also request assistance from IMO, through its Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme, in meeting these obligations and in implementing the provisions of the Protocol.



## What are the Potential Costs of Membership?

Only Parties to the OPRC Convention 1990 can accede to the OPRC-HNS Protocol 2000. There are no membership fees. However, States must be able to meet the basic obligations required in order to become parties to the OPRC-HNS Protocol.



Printed by MPG Impressions ISO 14001  
environmental accredited printer.

Printed using vegetable based inks.



**Mixed Sources**

Product group from well-managed  
forests and recycled wood or fiber  
www.fsc.org Cert no. SGS-COC-003115  
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

This report is printed on FSC material under chain of  
custody conditions by an FSC accredited printer.

**For more information, please contact:**

**Marine Environment Division**

International Maritime Organization

4 Albert Embankment

London SE1 7SR

United Kingdom

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7735 7611

**Fax:** +44 (0)20 7587 3210

**Email:** [info@imo.org](mailto:info@imo.org)

**Web:** [www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org)



**IMO**