



Document title	Training and exercise packages on OWR
Code	1-1
Category	INF
Agenda Item	4 – Training and information activities to support work of EWG OWR
Submission date	20.1.2017
Submitted by	Chair of EWG OWR
Reference	

Background

Oiled wildlife response has become a mature topic in the work of HELCOM RESPONSE and in the related national activities of the Contracting Parties. The Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG-OWR), created by HELCOM RESPONSE, has been working to coordinate the implementation a number of set objectives. These include *inter alia* the national implementation of preparedness activities and the exploration of opportunities for regional activities, including opportunities for training and exercises.

The attached document provides an overview of training and exercises that have become internationally available, and includes a proposal for the planning and organisation of specific wildlife response exercises in the Baltic.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Training and exercise packages on OWR

HELCOM RESPONSE Expert Working Group Oiled Wildlife Response
Draft January 2017

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Introduction

Oiled wildlife response has become a mature topic in the work of HELCOM RESPONSE and in the related national activities of the Contracting Parties. The Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG-OWR), created by HELCOM RESPONSE, has been working to coordinate the implementation a number of set objectives. These include *inter alia* the national implementation of preparedness activities and the exploration of opportunities for regional activities, including opportunities for training and exercises.

This paper aims to provide an overview of training and exercises that have become internationally available, and includes a proposal for the planning and organisation of specific wildlife response exercises in the Baltic.

Training courses

Hands-on training courses (interaction with oiled animals)

Oiled birds

In the course of recent years an extensive array of oiled bird rehabilitation courses has been developed as part of EU co-funded projects.

As part of the POSOW I project (2012-2013) a training package for volunteers was developed. The course consists of various lectures and skill labs and is suitable for different purposes:

- Train groups of interested individuals in their basic skills to rescue animals from the shoreline and keep them alive until experts arrive and a facility for rehabilitation can be made operational
- Train groups of individual volunteers who have offered their time in the aftermath of an oil spill incident on specific roles (e.g. animal capture, animal transport, stabilisation) as part of the overall wildlife response.

The recently completed EUROWA project (2015-2016) has developed various packages to deepen the knowledge and skills of individuals who have completed the POSOW-volunteer level.

The new EUROWA courses include four additional levels (ADVANCED, SPECIALIST, SECTION HEAD, and MANAGER) each in a modular form and normally consisting of a combination of online testing prior to admission to any of the higher level training courses and course packages which combine lectures, hands on training, skill labs, exercises and evaluation of individual skills.

Planning course

Provide key personnel (officers in national authorities) with an awareness of oiled wildlife risks, the operations in a wildlife response, the availability of national, regional and global resources, and the structure and purposes of a standard oiled wildlife response plan. On the basis of this course they can work with external wildlife experts to develop a country specific oiled wildlife response plan. This is a one-off 2-day course, preceding the actual plan development project.

Integrated wildlife response management

Ensure that key decision makers in oil spill response have a clear understanding of risks connected to oiled wildlife and how to manage these risks in an incident as part of an effective Wildlife Branch (or Wildlife Response Coordination Centre) that is integrated into the overall Incident Management System. Aspects of risk assessment, incident response planning, mobilisation, logistics, and finances that are connected to the oiled wildlife response activities are explained during a 1-day, one-off course. For future so called Wildlife Branch Directors this is the entry course for the more extensive specialist Wildlife Branch Managers course (see next).

Wildlife Branch Manager

Ensure that selected staff can assess, oversee and manage the wildlife operations in a variety of scenarios. Via an in-depth course (and related exercises) they will be able to recognise wildlife scenarios, assess the country and environmental settings, the services that external parties (wildlife authorities, scientists, wildlife response experts and response teams) can offer. They should learn to know how to implement these services via wildlife branch involvement (assigning roles and responsibilities), understand possible roles and impacts of media and public, be able to analyse and manage data, and how to package factual information for communication purposes. A Wildlife Branch Manager course is a two-day course, focussing on table tops and decision making skill labs. Individuals need to regularly attend a refresher course to expand on their experience and insights.

Experience via exercises

Wildlife dedicated exercises are important tools to allow trained staff to develop experience and interact with other parts of the Incident Management System and/or actors who are important for the delivery of a cost-effective response. Some main categories of exercises can be considered:

- Notification/mobilisation exercises
- Table top exercises
- Field/facility exercises
- Equipment exercises

Each of these categories could be organised standalone or combined with/nested into a larger exercise or a training course. The potential for designing wildlife exercises is large (see table 1).

Type of exercise		Description
1	Notification exercise	Check of contact details
2	Mobilisation procedure exercise	From notification to travel details
3	Mobilisation exercise	From notification to arrival onsite
4	Table top exercise (problem solving)	Group discussion to carry out a task
5	Table top exercise (role playing)	Functional roles are played using a scripted scenario with injects
6	Field exercise	Outdoors operational exercising of skills, roles and/or procedures
7	Facility exercise modular	Indoor exercising of department set-up, roles and operations or procedures
8	Facility exercise extended	Exercise including the set-up of a complete facility, playing of functional roles, and running of modular exercises inside the facility
9	Equipment check exercise	Unpacking of equipment for condition check and/or demonstration or showcasing
10	Equipment mobilisation exercise	Equipment leaves the warehouse where it is stockpiled, and is transported to an external location using a formal equipment mobilisation procedure.
11	Equipment deployment exercise	Mobilised equipment is unpacked and deployed/tested for use as part of an exercise set-up

Table 1: Types of exercises (Source: EUROWA database)

Both nationally and internationally opportunities can be created as part of planned oil spill exercises. An oiled wildlife component can be added to a larger oil spill exercise. An oiled wildlife exercise can also be set up in which a smaller oil spill response management component is added, e.g. to simulate decision making processes outside of the "Wildlife Branch".

Countries could organise exercise themselves, and make it possible for personnel from other countries to participate as an observer.

In all cases, exercises are meaningful if they are organised:

- Regularly, in the framework of a developed oiled wildlife response plan (the plan describes the need for exercises, and ideally also indicates the frequency with which these exercises should be held)
- In a way that they would allow pre-trained staff to play their trained role and develop experience working with other individuals playing related functions.
- With clear objectives as to what needs to be tested via the exercise. Clear objectives will lead to a better focus on the functionality of the set-up, and help to avoid over-complication or over-simplicity.
- Including a hot-wash evaluation and post-exercise evaluation so that lessons can be learned, leading to ever-improving future exercises, filling of gaps, detecting flaws in the response plan or related procedures, and motivated staff.

HELCOM Exercises

The HELCOM structure recognises various exercise types, which have been documented in the HELCOM RESPONSE Manual Vol I, Chapter 10, called BALEX ALPHA, BALEX BRAVO, BALEX CHARLIE, BALEX DELTA, BALEX ECHO. Table 2 explores the nature of these exercises as they are characterised in the Manual, and uses the wildlife types of Table 1 to indicate what kind of wildlife tweak could be given in order to end up with a meaningful package of wildlife exercise that can be used under HELCOM.

Name	Description (according to the HELCOM Manual, Vol.I; Chapter 10)	Types of exercises that apply (see table 1)	Wildlife tweak (the “W” variant)
Synthetic/Table top exercise (BALEX ALPHA)	A “paper exercise” the aim of which is to create a base for discussion on matters relating to organisation, communication, logistics, etc. in combatting actions involving two or more Baltic Sea Countries. Thought to be held in connection to HELCOM RESPONSE meetings.	4,5	BALEX ALPHA-W A table top wildlife exercise in which a wildlife scenario is introduced to a group of participants who represent two or more CPs. The ALPHA-W can be integrated into another ALPHA table top or even a DELTA or DELTA-W exercise.
Alarm Exercise (BALEX BRAVO)	To test the agreed procedures and lines of communication for reporting, requesting and providing assistance, and to get a picture of the current response readiness of the CP’s when called to assist. The exercise further aims to familiarise the personnel with the use and handling of the adopted POLREP form.	1,2,3	BALEX BRAVO-W Currently the EUROWA Module could be tested as part of a BALEX BRAVO exercise, by sending a request via CECIS. In the future, when CP’s would have internationally qualified response personnel, teams or equipment by their own, BRAVO-W could include the request for these systems via bilateral or multilateral communications. The Finnish BCU could perhaps be requested for.
Equipment Exercise (BALEX CHARLIE)	To test the cooperation between the combatting units of the Contracting Parties with respect to both communication and equipment. Very restricted involvement of personnel (only personnel needed for running the equipment). Carried out between two or more Contracting Parties with bordering Response Region. Other CPs and the Secretariat are informed and invited to send observers. An alternative date should be communicated to all involved, and at least three days in advance it must be clarified if the exercise will be held on the original date or shifts to the alternative date.	9,10,11	BALEX CHARLIE-W On the short term not widely applicable for wildlife, except perhaps for the Finnish BCU which could be made available to Estonia, Russia or Sweden.
Operational Exercise (BALEX DELTA)	Test the alarm procedure, response capability and the response time of the Contracting Parties, partly to test and train the staff functions and the cooperation between combatting units of the Contracting Parties.	6,7,8 in combination with 1,2,3 and 9,10 and 11, as appropriate	BALEX DELTA-W A host country CP could design and plan for a wildlife exercise in which field activities or facility activities are simulated by (teams of) trained personnel. The interaction between personnel from different CPs will be useful to explore common standards for animal handling, management, documentation and communication.
State-of-the-Art Exercise (BALEX ECHO)	Demonstration of type of equipment, response method, means of communication or scientific test. Relevant observers from the Contracting Parties should be invited.		BALEX ECHO-W This could be a completely scripted table-top for wildlife response decision making, a demonstration of a piece of wildlife equipment, or decision making support tool.

Table 2: A wildlife specific elaboration of HELCOM exercise types