

4.5.2 Communication

Cooperation at all levels is likely to be a key factor in the success of an effective and coordinated response. Two very distinct communication strategies need to be established:

- **Internal** which highlights how the various teams involved in the response communicate with each other ;
- **External** which deal with how the information is shared with the wider public using various media.

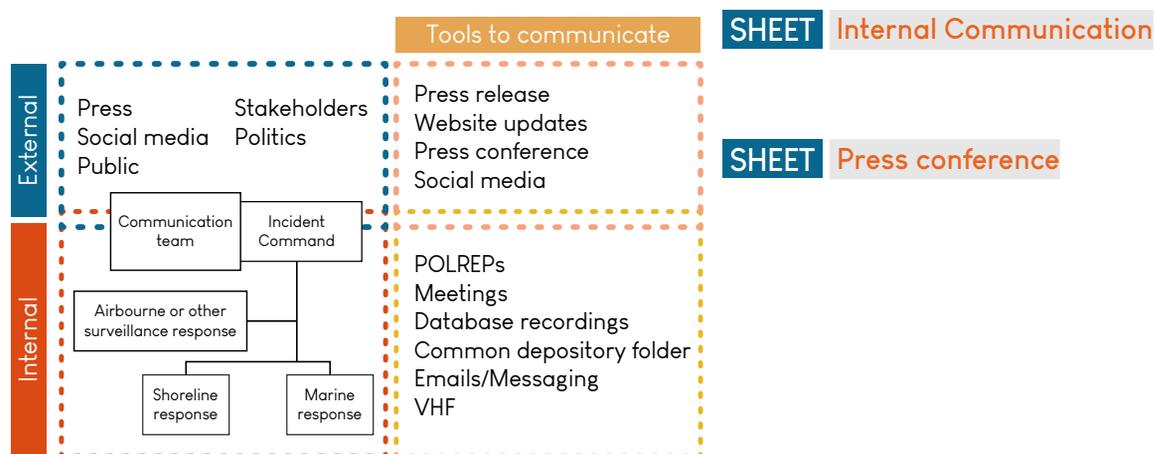


Figure 21: Flowchart illustrating an example of a typical communication structure in a function-based structure

4.6 Scenarios and strategies

4.6.1 Level of response - Tier system

Tiered preparedness and response are recognized as the basis for a robust framework. It establishes capability that can be escalated and cascaded to the scene. This avoids the proliferation of impractical stockpiles of large quantities of response resources yet can still provide an appropriate and credible response through the integration of local, regional and international capabilities.

The established three-tiered structure allows contingency planners to describe how an effective response to any spill will be provided, i.e. from small operational spillages to a worst credible case release at sea or on land.

The tier classification helps to define the resources required to deal with potential spill sce-

Information management is crucial to keep all external stakeholders and the general public informed and updated on the progress of the response and related matters. Examining external communications from the response team outwards, the communications team should be aware that different types of media will convey messages to different audiences. It is important to review the type of media utilised in order to ensure the best outreach for the target audience for every communication. Different types of media can be utilised by the authorities as well. This can include websites updates, official press release statements and social media status updates including photos, amongst others.

Having an appropriate communication plan prior to an event occurring aids the speed and quality of the response by the communication team. Having a set of engagement rules and pre-prepared statement templates for different eventualities can provide support the communication team. The plan should include a list of external outlets with which to communicate, such as local government, journalists, environmental groups etc. This list should be kept updated by the communication team. Having a verified and reliable online presence on social media prior to a crisis can help successfully share information during an event to a wider audience.

Important rules to note:



**Appoint
spokesperson**



**Communicate
early and often**



**Keep it
concise**



**Stick
to the facts**

- **Appoint spokesperson**

A communication plan should appoint a single person to be the spokesperson during a response. This person should ideally undergo media training prior to an incident and be experienced with public speaking.

All official enquiries should be relayed to the spokesperson.

- **Stick to the facts**

Only true and verified information should be shared. However, it is important to keep in mind that whenever limited information is available, communication might still be necessary, to inform the public of the actions taken so far. Partial or incomplete information from verified sources can sometimes be preferable to no information at all. However, unverified information should never be released.

- **Keep it concise**

Information needs to be concise. This is particularly important in the age of social media where short snapshots of information are favoured. Indeed, most social media platforms encourage succinctness, limiting the lengths of statements or allowing only short videos. The key points of the message should be relayed in easy to understand, non-specialist language and efficiently as possible.

Drafting a press release and organising a press conference

Aim of organising a press conference: To deliver a clear and managed message to a targeted audience.

Press statement

A press release statement is a tool that allows a pre-determined, concise message to be delivered to a wide range of media outlets to quickly and efficiently disseminate information. As with all external communication, any press statement should be approved by the On-Scene Commander (OSC) and the communications team. For more information on external communications. **SHEET** **External communication**

Things to consider when drafting a press statement:

- Answer the questions relating to the event: Who? What? Where? And How?
- Be concise, stick to the facts.
- Use simple, straight forward and non-specialist language.
- Use a tone that reassures the end user.
- Provide contact details for all media and public enquires to allow your organisation to manage the incoming information efficiently.

Do not forget the time, the date and the reference number of the statement release.

Press conference

A press conference should be organised by the communications team with the approval of the OSC.

- Media outlets need to be invited and a presentation or statement should be prepared ahead of time that provides an update on the situation and as many verified facts as is appropriate to give a clear understanding of the situation.
- A spokesperson, who has adequate media training, should be appointed to deliver the press conference. However, questions may arise that are best answered by experts / specialists, who should therefore be part of the speaker panel. If this is the case, moderator for the panel should be appointed.
- As with all external communication ensure that , all parties are have to be briefed on the key points and what on the facts have been verified checked and that and can be released to external parties.
- Keep the communication channels open with the public and the media but direct them through your approved channels to ensure your organisation has as much control as possible to sort and prioritise queries.
- Try to provide regular press conferences to give updates throughout the response and provide a platform for the public and the media to ask questions.

5.1 Notification and Information Gathering

5.1.1 Notification

A notification of an incident involving HNS can be received in the form of a

- Maritime alert message, called a Pollution Report (POLREP) produced by either the casualty's / a responding / passing vessel's captain or a coastal state as part of their intergovernmental pollution notification system **SHEET Incident Notification**.
- Pollution observation report / detection log produced by a trained aerial observer **SHEET Incident Notification**
- Automated spill response notifications (satellite-based surveillance)
- Unofficial written / verbal reports from members of the general public (report of visually observed pollution in port for example)

The level of detail of any initial report will be dependent on if there is a direct link between the pollution observed and the polluter: if there is no attributable source to the pollution observed, information about the type of cargo spilled will not be immediately available but instead will need to be gathered by first responders on site through monitoring and sampling (see [Chapter 5.3](#)).

5.1.2 Information Gathering

Once the initial incident notification has been received, it is crucial for decision makers and responders to gather objective information about the case to support the first response actions **SHEET First Actions Responder**. Initially, the data available might be scarce and difficult to verify. However, with time and access to various information sources, the overall understanding of the situation increases. The quantity of incoming information might be challenging to verify, prioritise and filter.

All information should be funnelled and relayed to the Command Centre, which is in charge of analysing and communicating to responders **SHEET Internal Communication** and to the relevant stakeholders

There are two types of data that can be collected:

1. Information specific to the incident that could not have been known ahead of time.

Responders should aim to obtain essential information on the location of the incident and the status of the vessel, bunkers and cargo as quickly as possible **SHEET Incident Data Gathering**.

The first information likely to be received would be from the captain and the vessel's crew as they follow the procedures from the Shipboard Marine Pollution Emergency Plan (SMPEP) onboard, which includes reporting requirements, response protocols / procedures and national and local contact points. **SHEET First Actions (Casualty)**.

Shipping documents such as Cargo Certificate / Shipper's Declaration / Dangerous Good Declaration and the appropriate SDS are the best initial sources of information for subs-