



Standard Guide for Ecological Considerations for the Use of Oilspill Dispersants in Freshwater and Other Inland Environments, Lakes and Large Water Bodies¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide covers the use of oilspill dispersants to assist in the control of oil spills. The guide is written with the goal of minimizing the environmental impacts of oil spills; this goal is the basis on which the recommendations are made. Aesthetic and socio-economic factors are not considered, although these and other factors are often important in spill response.

1.2 Spill responders have available several means to control or clean up spilled oil. In this guide, the use of dispersants is given equal consideration with other spill countermeasures. It is not considered as a “last resort” after all other methods have failed.

1.3 This is a general guide only. It assumes the oil to be dispersible and the dispersant to be effective, available, applied correctly, and in compliance with relevant government regulations. In the assessment of environmental sensitivity, it is assumed that the dispersant is nonpersistent in the natural environment. Oil, as used in this guide, includes crude oils and refined petroleum products. Differences between individual dispersants or between different oil products are not considered.

1.4 The guide is organized by habitat type, for example, small ponds and lakes, rivers and streams, and land. It considers the use of dispersants primarily to protect habitats from impact (or to minimize impacts) and to clean them after a spill takes place.

1.5 This guide applies only to freshwater and other inland environments. It does not consider the direct application of dispersants to subsurface waters.

1.6 In making dispersant use decisions, appropriate government authorities should be consulted as required by law.

1.7 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Significance and Use

2.1 This guide is meant to aid local and regional response teams who may use it during spill response planning and spill events.

2.2 This guide should be adapted to site specific circumstance.

3. Environment Covered—Lakes and Large Water Bodies

3.1 Lakes and large water bodies are major fresh water features that are a significant part of major water systems. They have a dynamic near shore ecology, and a wide mixture of animal and plants species. In northern regions, these water bodies may be partly or completely ice covered during part of the year but will not freeze to the bottom. Commercially important fishing and recreational activities are frequently associated with these water bodies.

3.2 While most of these bodies are naturally occurring and exist during the most year, some may be man-made.

3.3 The characteristics of these water bodies are:

- a) Open water area greater than 10 hectares,
- b) Water depths in excess of 1.5 m,
- c) Soft or hard bottom with a low organic content except in shallow water areas,
- d) Acidic water in some areas especially near industrial regions,
- e) A well defined inlet or outlet, or both, and
- f) A well defined shoreline of varied characteristics such as sand beaches and rocky headlands similar to marine environments. Some parts of the shore may be similar to those in ponds and sloughs.

4. Background

4.1 The effects of oil and dispersed oil on these aquatic environments have been the subject of numerous studies. The studies have involved both intentional experimental spills and studies undertaken during actual spill situations **(1-3)**.²

4.2 There have been a number of studies on the impact of oil and oil/dispersant mixtures on microbiological systems **(4-10)**.

4.3 The principal biotic components of such water bodies

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F-20 on Hazardous Substances and Oil Spill Response and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F20.13 on Treatment.

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² The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to the list of references at the end of this guide.