

Photo: Finnish Border Guard

ChemSAR Newsletter May 2018

What do we mean when we talk about OPs and SOPs?



Among the ChemSAR project we always talk about OPs and SOPs, and the formulation of SOPs and testing of SOPs... but how many people actually know what we are talking about. Let's try to clarify that.

First there is the OPs. It stands for Operational Plan. Operational Plan narrates the impact that Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) have on rescue operations and gives a general description of search and rescue operations in these situations.

SOPs stand for Standard Operational Procedures. They are operative models, which aim at streamlining the processes of different operators in a HNS situation where human lives are at risk. You could say they are instructions for the rescue operators telling what to do and how.

Before ChemSAR project started such plans and procedures didn't exist for HNS incidents. The risk of an accident is there as tens of millions of tons of chemicals are being transported in the Baltic Sea and the amount of passengers going through the Baltic ports is close to 100 million per year.

The rescue authorities identified a need for common SOPs, so that in case of an international rescue operation, joint guidelines could be used, thus the operations would become more effective, and more lives could be saved!

So you could say:

We talk about saving lives!



ChemSAR project creates uniform operational plans and standard operational procedures to save human lives in maritime hazardous and noxious substances incidents.

Main Results

- More efficient rescue operations at sea
- Enhanced transnational co-operation
- Increased capacity and competence of the maritime actors

Beneficiaries

Rescue authorities, Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres, rescue units, shipping companies, passengers, SAR training academies, coastal inhabitants and environmental authorities



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ChemSAR Midterm Conference: Prepare for the Unexpected

6 February 2017 Helsinki

After crossing the halfway, ChemSAR organised its Midterm Conference on 6 February 2018 in Helsinki, to go public with the so far achieved. The aim of the conference was to get wide expert contribution within the BSR region, and beyond, to fulfil the project's goal for common standardised guidelines for search and rescue operations in HNS incidents.

The Midterm Conference day consisted of expert speakers, a panel discussion, and audience contribution to the topic and ChemSAR outputs. However, first, the project and its overall objectives were introduced as our invitation had reached a wide range of professionals from different parts of Europe not yet familiar with the whole of the project. The guest speakers approached the day's topic from distinct standpoints, namely that of safety authorities, shipping companies, and rescue authorities.

"Chemicals is a strange animal"

Mr. **Markku Mylly**, Executive Director of the European Maritime Safety Agency EMSA, introduced the organisation's marine pollution response services for oil and chemical spills. He acknowledged the need for such projects as ChemSAR and was pleased that the cooperation has such a strong foothold in the Baltic Sea Region countries. In many other regions, the cooperation is often bilateral and may only concentrate on oil spills: "Chemicals is a strange animal". Mylly encouraged us to spread the project outcome also to other regions, such as the Mediterranean or Black Sea regions. He emphasized the strength of the multilateral co-operation if spreading the outcome to other regions.

Co-operation with shipping companies called for

Ms. **Tiina Kapulainen**, Loss Prevention Manager at Finnlines, talked about carrying dangerous goods on board. She claimed that it is a question of trust as the carrier must rely on the information given by

the shipper; it is the shipper's responsibility to give correct and accurate information on their cargo. She also highlighted that it is always challenging to combine dangerous cargo and passengers on a ro-ro vessel, albeit in her company procedures for incidents have been prepared. Kapulainen concluded by saying that still more co-operation with shipping companies is required to have more efficient rescue operations.

Status of ChemSAR

As the principal objective of the ChemSAR Midterm Conference was to publish ChemSAR outcome to other professionals, create discussion, and gain feedback, Mr. **Teemu Niemelä**, Project Advisor, Lieutenant Senior Grade, Finnish Border Guard, held an introductory speech about the concrete guidelines ChemSAR partners have developed so far, that is, about the core output of the project.

He led the audience towards the panel discussion by highlighting the central issues and main challenges the project needs to response. Niemelä began by showing some comments received in the survey ChemSAR partners made on Preparedness to maritime chemical incidents in the Baltic Sea Region. The clear message was that collaboration between



Photo: Finnish Border Guard

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Photo: Swedish Coast Guard

different countries, authorities, and other involved parties is indeed needed.

In addition, he clarified how the ChemSAR Operational plans (OP) and Standard operational procedures (SOP) and SOP Checklists are understood and created. He brought forward the main issues tackled in the project; the so far identified HNS influence on SAR includes issues related to time-frame, information, coordination, and technical and financial function resources.

Niemelä also named the chief challenges, into which the SOPs are aiming to respond: situation awareness, safe area, safety on-scene, embarking, emergency/first response, evacuation possibilities, and possible contamination.

ChemSAR is navigating across uncharted areas

In the panel discussion the complexity of chemical accidents and the challenges of the rescue operations were discussed. The panellists shared the opinion that, no doubt, an improvement to the current situation is required and ChemSAR project is on the right track. They also emphasized the difficulty of the task as it is relatively easy to have co-operation between a small number of countries but when more countries are involved finding a solution gets complicated.

The ChemSAR Midterm Conference and panel discussion was moderated by Professor **Lauri Ojala** from the University of Turku.

All and all, the ChemSAR Midterm Conference was successfully conducted. We managed to attract and get contribution from experts from various organisations of eight different countries, among them such countries like France and Spain. The message from the Midterm Conference is that ChemSAR is tackling a problem, the solution to which will definitely enhance the maritime response in the region. The project outcome was acknowledged to benefit, not just the rescue authorities and services, but also other parties concerned, such as shipping companies. ChemSAR is charting the uncharted. It also became evident that many things still need to be done in order for the ChemSAR outcome to reach the whole Baltic Sea Region.



Photo: Päivi Söderholm

The panellists from the left: **Danel Tüür** (Estonian Police and Border Guard Board), **Juho Kurttio** (Finnish Border Guard), **Sari Nyroos** (Centre for Maritime Studies, University of Turku), **Teemu Niemelä** (Finnish Border Guard), **Carolys Ramsay** (Finnlines) and **Markku Mylly** (EMSA). Professor Lauri Ojala was moderating the panel, and the whole conference.

Oil Spill, Chemical Leak and Lost Crew Members Testing SOPs in a Simulator Exercise in Tallinn

31 October – 2 November 2017, Tallinn

The captain of M/V Regal Star was again in trouble outside Tallinn. His crew detects an oil spill on the 3rd enclosed car deck, in the vicinity of a group of truck-trailers. The crew prepares for oil spill response. soon the radio communication is lost between oil spill response team and ship command center. Caused by crew emergency response activities, some passengers start to indicate signs of panic.



Photo: Päivi Söderholm

OPV Turva approaching the distressed vessel.

The SOPs had been revised after the feedback from the tabletop exercises, and it was time to test the improved SOPs in simulator exercises. The main aim of the exercises was to evaluate the outcome of SOPs but also, for example, to practice identifying the HNS and to test the communication in a multi-type accident.

Next time we will go live! ChemSAR Live Exercise will be arranged in Tallinn 13 September 2018 where ChemSAR outputs will get their ultimate test.



Photo: Päivi Söderholm

Swedish Coast Guard's patrol vessel Amfitrite was also nearby, as well as the Patrol vessel Pikker from Estonia.



Photo: Päivi Söderholm

Estonian Border Guard's pollution control vessel Kindral Kurvits also came to help in the rescue operation.



Photo: Päivi Söderholm

Media was interested in the project and the co-operation of rescue authorities. Danel Tüür was interviewed by the Tallinn TV.