



MEDIA RELEASE

SYDNEY HARBOUR “EXERCISE BIG DIPPER” OIL SPILL RESPONSE SIMULATION

22 October 2009

Sydney Ports Corporation is today staging ‘Exercise Big Dipper’, a simulated oil spill, designed to test the emergency response capabilities of Sydney Ports Corporation and Shell.

The two-day emergency simulation involves the scenario of a crude oil tanker running aground at Gore Cove on Sydney Harbour, spilling 40 tonnes of crude oil. The exercise begins today as a desktop exercise, with a practical exercise scheduled for 6 November.

Sydney Ports Chief Executive Officer Grant Gilfillan said the aim of the exercise was to test Sydney Ports’ response capability to a ‘Tier 2’ oil spill, defined as a spill of between ten and 1,000 tonnes of oil.

“In this scenario, a crude oil tanker berthing at the Shell facility at Gore Cove loses control resulting in the discharge of oil into the Harbour,” Mr Gilfillan said.

“One of the aims of the event is to ensure the containment of any spilled oil, the safe operation of all Sydney Ports plant and equipment and the safe and effective response of both Sydney Ports and Shell staff involved.

“The reality is that Port Jackson is a working port—and we have to be prepared for any emergency.

“This exercise will test emergency procedures and boom deployment options to prevent any escalation to a ‘Tier 3’ oil spill, greater than 1,000 tonnes of oil.

Sydney Ports has responsibility for responding to emergency situations 24/7 and has an experienced team of 90 marine operations personnel at its disposal to ensure the safety of port users and protecting the environment of Sydney Harbour and Port Botany.

“Over the two days around 30 Sydney Ports marine operations personnel will be involved, and during the practical exercise on the 6 November a range of equipment such as containment booms, skimmers and specialised oil recovery vessels will be employed,” Mr Gilfillan said.

Mr Gilfillan said the exercise would also test Sydney Ports’ communications with Shell and with all supporting agencies involved in the *NSW State Waters Marine Oil and Chemical Spill Contingency Plan*. It follows Exercise ‘Woe-B-Tide’ held in August that tested Sydney Ports Corporation and Caltex response to a simulated oil spill off Kurnell on Botany Bay.

“As well as conducting regular exercises such as this, to ensure we’re well-prepared for emergencies and oil spills, Sydney Ports also conducts random safety audits to minimise the chance of such incidents,” Mr Gilfillan said.

During the 2008/09 financial year, Sydney Port officers carried out 4871 audits on vessels transferring bulk oil, gas and chemicals. There were 106 dangerous goods container terminal audits. In addition, last year Sydney Ports responded to 236 reported incidents of marine pollution.

Contact: Peter Zangari 0408 441 010 or 9296 4995