Public Consultation

Improving offshore safety, health and environment in Europe

Introduction

ASTM International is a globally recognized standards development organization with individual members from over 135 World Trade Organization member countries – including Europe and the United States. Our standards are used in research and development, product testing and quality systems. They are often a critical component of the information infrastructure that guides design, manufacturing and trade in the global economy. ASTM International is fortunate to count more than 1,500 European members from diverse sectors including chemicals and plastics; renewable energy and biofuels; sustainability; and the life sciences.

One reason for the success of ASTM standards is our proximity and relevance to the experts and consumers who rely on them. ASTM International members come from the public sector, civil society and industry, and are therefore well placed to directly contribute their technical knowledge and expertise to the development of standards of key importance to their fields. ASTM International currently has more than 30,000 members worldwide.

Emergency response and International activities

ASTM International Committee F20 on Hazardous Substances and Oil Spill Response has developed international standards which have served as proven technical resources in oil spill response and cleanup operations. Oil spill related subjects covered in F20's 59 standards include containment booms and skimmers, dispersants, in-situ burning, surveillance and tracking, shoreline countermeasures, bioremediation, adsorbents and other topics. The recent disaster in the Gulf of Mexico highlighted the critical role that ASTM standards play in assisting stakeholders with managing the environmental and economic consequences of a major spill.

According to Mervin Fingas, an independent consultant in Alberta, Oil spills of 1,000 gallons [3.8 m3] or so are actually routine occurrences throughout the world. There is a pressing need to have high quality standards to cover every aspect from response to control, removal and treatment to in-situ burning, surveillance and tracking, shoreline measures and bioremediation. The spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico raised the question of what new standards may be required to address spills at sites involving extreme engineering and difficult access.

Additionally, ASTM International Technical Committee E47 on Biological Effects and Environmental Fate plays a role in both the initial response and follow-up to oil spills. E47's goal is to understand water system environments and develop ecotoxicologically based standards to monitor and manage the ecological health of the respective water system. The committee is contributing to efforts to better manage invasive species with the development of three proposed standards. Complementing the efforts of Committee E47 in the area of impacted water assessment in the gulf is a notable standard from ASTM International Committee D19 on Water. To support in-field analysis of oil in water analysis, professionals involved in cleanup operations are

relying on ASTM D7575, Test Method for Solvent-Free Membrane Recoverable Oil and Grease by Infrared Determination.

Standards need to be developed quickly and be able to respond to unanticipated situations. ASTM standards can be developed within months and encourages the participation of all the interested parties, producers, suppliers, end users, government entities, and NGOs to collaborate to improve our standards and enhance the global oil spill response system. In conclusion, ASTM International is in a position to better equip the Commission and the European Union to respond to new challenges and improve offshore oil safety, the environment and health.