

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

REPUBLIC OF KOREA: OIL SPILL

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This bulletin is being issued for information only.

The Republic of Korea National Red Cross, with the support of the Federation, has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

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The oil spill, the largest in the Republic of Korea's history, has caused extensive damage to thousands of hectares and led the government to declare Taean County a special disaster zone.

The Situation

On the morning of 7 December, an 11,800-ton crane-carrying barge belonging to Samsung Heavy Industries collided with the Hebei Spirit, a 146,000-ton Hong Kong-registered super tanker that was at anchor ten km northwest of Mallipo, South Chungcheong Province, Korea. The crane punctured three holes in the ship's port side cargo tanks, causing a leakage of about 10,500 tons of crude oil into the sea.

According to a government report as of 13 December, the spill, the largest in the Republic of Korea's history, has damaged 339 fisheries on 3,741 hectares. It is anticipated that the damage will extend to an additional 221 fisheries on 2,978 hectares. The provincial government predicted that in a day or two, most shellfish grounds in the area will be severely affected. With damage escalating to enormous proportions, on 9 December the provincial government asked the central government to declare Taean County a disaster area. According to the Maritime Police situation room, the slick has resumed its southward movement and reached a point 37 km from Anmyeon Island. Aided by large vessels and helicopters, anti-disaster workers are focusing on preventing the slick from spreading to Anmyeon. On 12 December, the government declared Taean County a special disaster zone.

The emergency containment operation is expected to continue for two months, but even when complete it will take much longer for the ecosystem to recover. Experts say leaving the cleanup to nature will take at least ten years and perhaps as long as a century.

Red Cross action

The Daejeon-Choongnam chapter of the Republic of Korea National Red Cross (KNRC) dispatched twelve IT/communication volunteers to the affected site on 8 December to assess the situation. One mobile kitchen and an emergency response vehicle moved to the contaminated Taean County coastline on Day One.

From 8 to 12 December, some 1,000 volunteers and 13 staff supported the clean-up operation on and near Mallipo beach by providing assistance such as water, food, and materials for the clean-up effort. Three mobile kitchens, two tents and one relief vehicle were also deployed by the KNRC. Hanseo University in Chungcheong Province, a well-known aviation college, in partnership with the national society provided its airstrip for supporting logistics operations to mobilize in-kind relief materials for the affected areas. The KNRC is seeking further cooperation with the government authorities to address the humanitarian consequences of this historic man-made disaster and respond to any additional needs.

Coordination

The ministry of foreign affairs is in close communication with China, Russia and Japan who are members of the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) and with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of America (NOAA) for the rapid purchase of necessary clean-up materials including absorbents. The urgent procurement of around one tonne of absorbents is in progress due to the demand-supply gap following massive oil spill clean-up activities. It is reported that the government will reach a decision on what further assistance is needed following a detailed assessment.

The KNRC is also in communication with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures headquarters established by the government for further planning to continue the necessary support in a coordinated manner.



Thousands of KNRC staff and volunteers were mobilized to clean up the oil spill.



How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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