



PRESS RELEASE

International oil spill response exercise off Rostock completed successfully

13 June 2013 (HELCOM Information Services) – The calm weather helped the success of [HELCOM BALEX DELTA](#), regular Baltic oil response exercise, completed today off the coast of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany under the direction of the [Central Command for Maritime Emergencies](#) (CCME). The annual exercise, one of the largest worldwide, had 23 oil response ships from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden, along with two airplanes and a helicopter, practising the response to a major oil spill. This involved for instance the using of special equipment for collecting oil and testing communication between the involved units, and the overall response capability of the HELCOM Contracting Parties.

In the exercise scenario, an inbound trawler collided with an outbound vessel “Spiekeroog” in the vicinity of Warnemünde port at 09:00 hrs local time on 12 June. “Spiekeroog” reported leakage of its starboard storage tank with a capacity of 2500m³ and continuous outflow with an estimated rate of 10m³ per hour. A leakage over 50m³ in size is considered a major one. The “accident” resulted in two oil slicks, simulated well by a mass of 70m³ of floating popcorn, the movements of which were also monitored by the surveillance aircrafts.

“Regular practice on communication and cooperation between combating units is of outmost importance, should a major accident happen in the Baltic Sea with its particularly vulnerable marine environment. The general objective of the BALEX DELTA exercises is to ensure that every HELCOM Contracting Party is able to lead a major response operation, and Germany did a remarkable job“, says Bernt Stedt, Chair of HELCOM Response Group.

Dieter Schmidt, Deputy head of CCME stated that “Although this year’s exercise was very successful, there is no reason to lean back. Oil spills know no borders. Therefore it is of high importance for the Baltic coastal states to train together regularly. This year it was the turn of Germany to direct the BALEX DELTA: and it was a great pleasure for us to host all this competent partners. Next year Latvia will take the turn.”

Due to the recent heavy flooding in North-East Germany requiring intense attention by the national authorities, the intended shoreline response exercise was called off.

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Note for editors:

[Central Command for Maritime Emergencies](#) (CCME; in German: Havariekommando) is a joint institution of the German Federal Government and the Federal Coastal States. It was established in 2003 to set up and carry out maritime emergency management both in the North Sea and in the Baltic Sea. CCME is based in Cuxhaven, Northwest Germany and has about 40 employees, working in five different sections.

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The [Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission](#), usually referred to as HELCOM, is an intergovernmental organization of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries and the European Union. HELCOM has worked since 1974 to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to ensure safety of navigation in the region. HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area," more usually known as the Helsinki Convention.

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