Ship-Sources Oil Spills Stats and Facts

FACTS

Dangers associated with ship-source oil spills:

1. Oil spills release large quantities of oil into marine environments, leading to severe contamination of water bodies, coastlines, and sensitive ecosystems.
2. The oil coats the feathers and fur of birds and mammals, impairing their ability to fly, swim, or thermoregulate. Marine mammals, such as whales, dolphins, and seals, can suffer from inhalation or ingestion of oil, leading to respiratory problems, organ damage, and even death. Fish, shellfish, and other marine organisms can also be harmed by oil, affecting their populations and disrupting the food chain.
3. Oil spills can reach coastlines and impact sensitive coastal habitats, including beaches, marshes, and mangroves. The oil can smother vegetation, suffocate organisms living in the sediment, and contaminate critical nesting and breeding grounds for various species.
4. The toxic components of oil can harm phytoplankton and other primary producers, which form the base of the marine food web. The presence of oil in water can also reduce oxygen levels, leading to hypoxia or anoxia, which further harms aquatic organisms.
5. Fishing grounds can be contaminated, leading to the loss of livelihoods for fishermen and fishery closures. Coastal tourism, which relies on pristine beaches and healthy marine environments, can suffer as well.
6. Direct exposure to oil and its toxic components can cause skin irritation, respiratory problems, and other health issues.
7. Some components of oil may persist in the environment for

years, leading to chronic contamination and ongoing ecological impacts.

STATS

- Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill was one of the largest and most infamous oil spills in history. It occurred in the Gulf of Mexico when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, owned by BP, experienced a blowout. Approximately 4.9 million barrels (210 million gallons) of oil were released.
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill where an oil tanker, ran aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska, resulting in a massive oil spill. An estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil were released.
- Prestige Oil Spill where a single-hulled oil tanker, suffered a structural failure and sank off the coast of Spain. It released around 20 million gallons of heavy fuel oil into the sea, affecting coastlines in Spain, France, and Portugal.
- The total volume of oil lost to the environment from tanker spills in 2021 was approximately 10,000 tonnes.
- Accidental oil tank vessel spills account for approximately 8-13% of all oil spilled into the oceans. The main causes of oil tank vessel spills are collision (29%), grounding (22%), mishandling (14%) and sinking (12%), among others.