

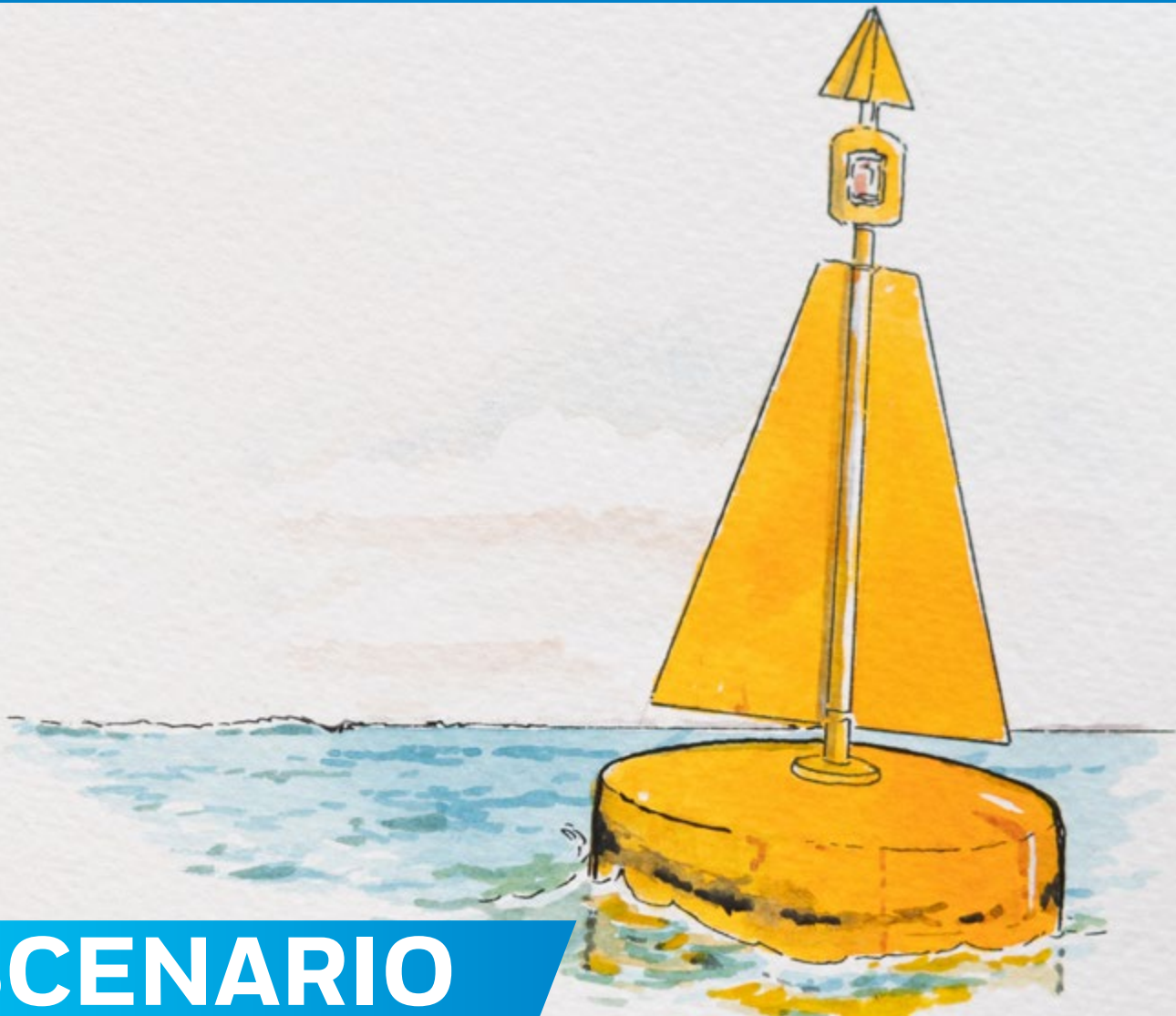


# OIL SPILL SAMPLING SCENARIOS

**INTERDISCIPLINARY PRACTICAL GUIDELINES ON OIL SPILL SAMPLING IN EUROPE**

**Developed by experts from EU/EFTA countries under the framework of EMSA's Consultative Technical Group for Marine Pollution Preparedness and Response (CTG MPPR)**

**A special mention to Mr Juan Carlos Arbex Sánchez for the technical drawings**



# SCENARIO SAMPLING IN BEACHES AND ROCKY SHORES



## IMPORTANT NOTE

---

These scenarios are intended as a practical manual in the field. Please be sure to have familiarised yourself beforehand with the main text of the EMSA document “Interdisciplinary practical guidelines on oil spill sampling in Europe”.

## DEFINITION OF THE SCENARIO

This scenario describes sampling activities exclusively carried out from land without the help of boats, where everything from thin layers of oil to tar balls can be present on the surface. Depending on the substrate, oil type, temperature and weather conditions, oil may also have penetrated the upper layer of the ground and /or be covered by new sand / debris, making it necessary

to check below the visible surface for oil. Oil can be sampled from the drift line as well as be scrapped off rocks, beachheads, piers etc., and can be collected from sandy patches. Tar balls can be found along the drift line wherever the water movement allows them to gather.



Example of locations to be sampled

## SAMPLING PURPOSES

**Several purposes for sampling might be intended, these include:**

- Characterisation of the oil and/or identifying the type of oil.
- Determination of the homogeneity of an oil spill.
- Determination of the degree of weathering of an oil spill.
- Determination of the source(s) of an oil spill.
- Providing evidence in criminal proceedings through the comparison of spill samples with samples of possible sources.



## SAMPLING STRATEGIES

### The sampling strategy for a case that is comparable with the given example could be:

- Decide on a sampling strategy before sampling starts. If necessary, coordinate your actions with other involved parties and other sampling strategies being used in the operation or at other sampling sites.
- Organise the sampling procedure so it progresses from the least contaminated to the most contaminated location to avoid cross contamination.
- Locate all possibly related geographically distinctive spill locations during all the days that the spill continues and include them in the sampling plan.
- Look for clues that can be an indication of the source of the spill. If potential sources are identified include them in sampling. Try to obtain samples of all potential sources for comparison with spill samples.
- Focus sampling on the areas of undisturbed, thick layers of oil (where possible).
- Also take samples from locations where the spill has a different visual oil appearance in colour or thickness of the layer, indicating e.g., different viscosity etc.
- Take representative samples of all geographically distinct spill locations during all the days that the spill continues.
- When a distinct spill site is large, take representative samples with maximum spatial difference covering the whole area.
- Take background samples during all the days that the spill continues or as appropriate.
- If a spill continues over a very long period (e.g. months), longer intervals between sampling might be appropriate in the latter stages of a spill.



### IMPORTANT NOTE



**IT IS ADVISABLE TO TAKE MORE SAMPLES TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE.**



**REMEMBER! THERE IS NO SECOND CHANCE FOR SAMPLING.**

## SAMPLING PLAN

Sampling plans are necessary tools for a coordinated sampling effort for a specific incident; they specify the locations and amounts of samples to be taken from the different pollution spots, from known and/or possible sources and from background areas, taking into consideration the available mobilisation of sample takers.

## SAMPLING EQUIPMENT



Nitrile gloves



ETFE net



Stainless steel spatula,  
stainless steel scraper or  
PTFE scraper



Glass bottles with inert  
lining in the lid



Sampling documentation  
and seals



Transport container  
(insulated and cooled, if  
needed)



If available: camera for  
photo/video

**OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE SAMPLING PROCEDURES TO USE IN THIS****SCENARIO:**

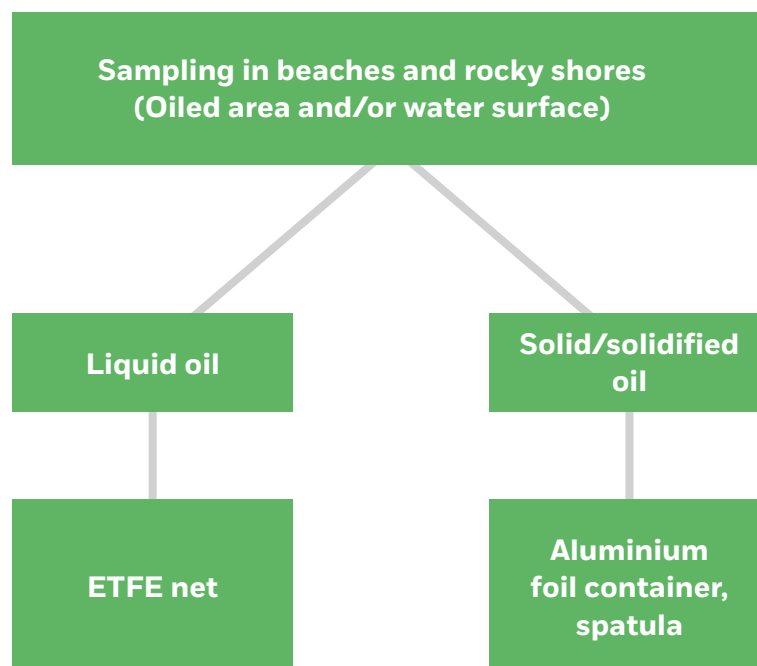
**Depending on the oil type to be sampled and the extent of the spill, the following techniques should be used<sup>1</sup>:**

**Liquid oil<sup>2</sup> (including sheens):**

- Sampling by ETFE net.

**Solid/solidified oil (emulsified oil (“mouse”), tar balls, and compact material in general):**

- Sampling by aluminium foil containers or spatula.



<sup>1</sup>Direct sampling with a glass bottle should be the last resort in the absence of other options since this sampling technique leads to increased risks of (cross) contamination while yielding samples of lesser quality

<sup>2</sup>The term “liquid oil” describes all types of oil that are fluid enough to attach to the ETFE net, unrelated to the specific oil type

**HOW AND WHERE TO SAMPLE (POSITION AND TECHNIQUE)****ETFE net**

Sweep the oil layer with the ETFE net to collect oil.

Store the ETFE net in the glass bottle with an inert lining in the lid.

If there is oil on oiled surfaces (rocks, beachheads, pier etc.), wipe the ETFE net over them (avoid pressing too hard and rubbing off material from the underlying surface).

Prevent parts of the net becoming trapped between the mouth of the bottle and the lid, to avoid leaking.

Do not fill up the glass bottle with water after storing the ETFE net in it.





**HOW AND WHERE TO SAMPLE (POSITION AND TECHNIQUE) CONT.**

**Stainless steel spatula, stainless steel scraper or PTFE scraper**

Use a stainless steel spatula or alternative to scrape thick oil layers from hard substrates like rocks or beachheads. Transfer the oil or the spatula with the oil to a glass bottle with an inert lining in the lid. Make sure not to scrape off material from the surface underlying the oil.

In case of doubt a background sample can be collected from a section of the substrate that is obviously free from oil or from a comparable 'clean' object nearby.

Use a stainless steel spatula directly to collect tar balls and other compact material into a glass bottle with an inert lining in the lid.





## KEYPOINTS FOR GOOD SAMPLING PRACTICE

### For all optional sample procedures, the practical basic principles of forensic oil sampling apply

- 1 Personal safety - explosion or fire: Consider whether there is a risk of explosion or fire. High risk can be expected with fresh spills of crude oil and light fuel oils (lighter than diesel). Whenever there is high risk of explosion or fire due to the presence of highly volatile compounds, additional regulations apply.
- 2 Personal safety – toxic fumes: Oil spills can produce toxic fumes; use a suitable respiratory protection. Whenever possible approach the spilled oil from the wind direction limiting personal exposure.
- 3 Use disposable nitrile gloves for sampling. Change gloves for every new sample.
- 4 When using an ETFE net, put gloves on only directly before you touch the clean ETFE net and make sure to not touch anything else with the gloves to avoid contaminating the ETFE net.
- 5 While taking samples always work from the least contaminated to the most highly contaminated location to avoid cross contamination.
- 6 Required sample amount depends on sampling purpose (analyses for physical parameters - hundreds of millilitres up to litres; oil for forensic analyses – a few millilitres).
- 7 No spill is too small to be sampled. Even if you don't see oil on the ETFE net, it can be enough for analysis.
- 8 Always try to minimise the handling of the sample as much as possible to make sure that your handling of samples and equipment does not contaminate the samples. Look out for lids not to be contaminated during sampling and not to switch lids between samples.
- 9 Take care to not switch samples, label each sample at once after taking it.

**WHAT TO DO AFTER SAMPLING IS COMPLETED**
**(SEAL, LABEL, TRANSPORT)**
**Sample documentation and labelling**

- Carefully label all samples and fill in the required documents to maintain the chain of custody during transport and for the request for analysis.
- Check whether sampling has been properly completed according to the field checklist of table 1 of chapter 4 (main document: Interdisciplinary practical guidelines on oil spill sampling in Europe).
- At all times keep documents like the analysis request form and the chain of custody form together with the samples.



## WHAT TO DO AFTER SAMPLING IS COMPLETED

### (SEAL, LABEL, TRANSPORT) (CONT.)

#### Transportation



- Seal sample bottles and when appropriate, the transport box.
- Inform the laboratory ahead of delivery to prepare the controlled reception of samples.
- Transport samples to the laboratory directly after sampling. Keep samples in the dark and cooled (4°C) during transport.
- Make sure that the chain of custody is maintained by every responsible handler of the samples by ensuring the chain-of-custody forms are completed and signed.
- If you can, use a temperature logger in the transport box or cooler to prove proper transport conditions.
- Ensure that sample bottles are shatter-proof and are packed properly. If samples contain liquids, use absorbing material in the package to reduce the effects of leakage.
- Follow applicable regulations regarding the shipping of oil-containing samples.

**DON'T FORGET**

- ✓ **USE CLEAN NEW NITRILE GLOVES AND CLEAN TOOLS FOR EVERY SAMPLE.**
- ✓ **COLLECT SAMPLES IN ORDER FROM THE LEAST CONTAMINATED TO THE MOST HIGHLY CONTAMINATED LOCATION TO AVOID CROSS CONTAMINATION.**
- ✓ **FOCUS SAMPLING ON THE AREAS OF UNDISTURBED OIL.**
- ✓ **COLLECT BACKGROUND SAMPLES (ESPECIALLY WHEN A SAMPLING LOCATION HAS A HISTORY OF SPILLS)**
- ✓ **REMEMBER THAT THERE IS NO SECOND CHANCE FOR SAMPLING.**
- ✓ **IF IN DOUBT ABOUT DETAILS OF THE PROCEDURE, CHECK BACK TO THE MAIN TEXT OF THE OIL SPILL SAMPLING GUIDELINES.**





## ABOUT THE EUROPEAN MARITIME SAFETY AGENCY

The European Maritime Safety Agency is one of the European Union's decentralised agencies. Based in Lisbon, the Agency's mission is to ensure a high level of maritime safety, maritime security, prevention of and response to pollution from ships, as well as response to marine pollution from oil and gas installations. The overall purpose is to promote a safe, clean and economically viable maritime sector in the EU.



[emsa.europa.eu](https://emsa.europa.eu)

### Get in touch for more information

#### European Maritime Safety Agency

Praça Europa 4  
Cais do Sodré  
1249-206 Lisboa  
Portugal

Tel +351 21 1209 200 / Fax +351 21 1209 210  
[emsa.europa.eu](https://emsa.europa.eu)

