

Armed to beat oil pollution

Hongkong has taken measures to prevent, and the means to deal with, oil pollution at any time, the Director of Marine, Mr M.J. Alexander, said yesterday.

In a talk to members of the City Lions Club, Mr Alexander said that as far as the threat of oil pollution resulting from accidental spillage is concerned, Hongkong is no different from other ports in the world.

"So long as ships continue to trade in and out of our waters, a pollution risk exists."

Mr Alexander pointed out that last year about 400 tankers brought in about six million tons of oil in addition to a further four million tons being moved around local waters by way of bunker fuel carried on nearly 9,000 cargo vessels entering port.

To minimise oil pollution, Mr Alexander said, the Government gives high priority to navigational safety.

A number of modern navigational aids are located strategically throughout the waters to guide mariners to and from berths.

Next in priority is the control of shipping to

minimise the risk of collision and grounding.

Ships are required to navigate within traffic separation lanes and to report their position, course and speed by radio-telephone at regular intervals so that their movements can be monitored and co-ordinated.

Mr Alexander said consultants are now investigating the feasibility and cost of establishing a radar and television surveillance system to enable movements of ships to be monitored in all weather conditions.

There is already a contingency plan for dealing with an oil spillage should it occur.

Mr Alexander said the enormous social repercussion of a massive spillage is not difficult to imagine when it is realised that about 150,000 people use the beaches on the south coast of Hongkong Island during weekends.

He said that while the

contingency plan deals with pollution on the beaches, the Government's main efforts are directed towards the prevention of spillages and, if they should occur, to stop them from reaching land.

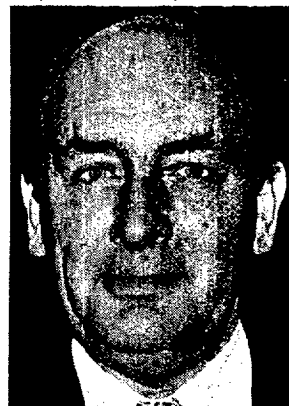
The Marine Department, he said, has procured the necessary equipment to deal with a massive spillage covering a sea area of several square miles, on a progressive and pre-planned basis.

Mr Alexander said some of these facilities are:

- A purpose-built pollution control launch, supported by 20 Government craft, all fitted with anti-pollution equipment which can be mobilised and deployed at short notice.

- About 5,000 ft of specially designed oil containment boom for sealing the entrances of typhoon shelters, protecting the intakes of power stations and surrounding a stranded vessel.

- 30,000 gallons of low toxicity oil dispersant



Mr Alexander chemical ready for immediate use which can be supplemented by 25,000 gallons of oil dispersant chemical held by various firms.

"Given the necessary element of good luck, therefore, Hongkong is in a position to deal with an oil pollution incident at any time," Mr Alexander said.