



Republic of the Philippines  
**Department of Environment and Natural Resources**  
Visayas Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City 1100  
Tel. No. (632) 929-6626 to 29; VOIP Trunkline (632) 755-3300/755-3330  
Website: [www.denr.gov.ph](http://www.denr.gov.ph)

## **TASK FORCE MT. PRINCESS EMPRESS OIL SPILL INCIDENT**

### **SITUATIONAL REPORT NO. 6**

7 March 2023

---

*Sources: Philippine Coast Guard, Office of Civil Defense, DENR EMB (incl. MIMAROPA and Region VI), DENR BMB, PENROs and CENROs*

#### **I. SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW**

On 28 February 2023, at approximately 04:16 AM, MT Princess Empress was reportedly half submerged in the vicinity waters of Balingawan Point, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro with 20 crews onboard and 800,000 liters of Industrial Fuel Oil. The vessel came from Bataan and was on its way to Iloilo when it encountered engine trouble due to overheating. At approximately 04:20 AM, all 20 crew members were rescued and brought to Subic Bay, Zambales.

On 01 March 2023, MT Princess Empress had completely submerged.

On 03 March 2023, a State of Calamity was declared in Pola, Oriental Mindoro.

On 04 March 2023, the Municipalities of Naujan, Pola, Bongabong and Roxas in Oriental Mindoro as well as the Municipality of Caluya in Antique were reported to be affected.

On 06 March 2023, oil slicks were reported to have reached Agutaya, Palawan. Further, the location of MT Princess Empress has been determined and will be verified further, as relayed by DENR Secretary to Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor via phone call.

Also, on 06 March 2023, a State of Calamity was declared in Caluya, Antique, as well as seventy-six (76) coastal barangays across nine (9) municipalities in Oriental Mindoro.

#### **II. EFFECTS**

## Affected Areas

As of 07 March 2023, nine (9) Municipalities in Oriental Mindoro, one (1) Municipality in Palawan, and one (1) Municipality in Antique were reported to be affected.

### Oriental Mindoro

1. Naujan; 2 areas: Herrera and Masaguing (coastal waters)
2. Pola (most heavily affected); 11 areas: Misong, Calima, are Batuhan, Zone 1, Zone 2, Bayanan, Tagumpay, Buhay na Tubig and Bacawan, Tiguisan and Putting Cacao (shoreline)
3. Pinamalayan; 9 areas: Ranzo, Banilad, Pili, Lumangbayan, Wawa, Zone1, Marfrancisco, Papandayan and Quinabigan (coastal waters)
4. Gloria; 7 areas: Guimbonan, Kawit, Lucio Laurel, Tambong, Sta. Theresa and Agsalin, Maragooc (coastal waters)
5. Bansud; 4 areas: Proper Bansud, Proper Tiguisan, Salcedo at Sumagui (coastal waters)
6. Bongabong; 8 areas: Labasan, Aplaya, Poblacion, Camantigue, Masaguisi, Kawayan and Dayhagan (coastal waters)
7. Roxas; 5 areas: Dangay, San Jose, Bagumbayan, Paclasan and San Isidro (coastal waters)
8. Mansalay; 8 areas: Santa Brigada, Wasig, Delmundo, Poblacion, Teresa, Donn Pedro, Manual and Budburan (coastal waters)
9. Bulalacao; 7 areas: San Roque, San Juan, Balatasan, Milagrosa, Poblacion, Maujao (coastal waters); Maasin (shoreline)

### Palawan

1. Agutaya; 2 areas: Concepcion and Algeciras

### Antique

1. Caluya; 4 areas: Alegria, Tinogboc, Semirara in Semirara Island, and Sibolo in Liwagao Island.

## State of Calamity

As of 06 March 2023, ten (10) areas have been declared to be under State of Calamity:

<b>MIMAROPA</b>	<b>REGION VI</b>
-----------------	------------------

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Naujan, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>2. Pola, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>3. Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>4. Gloria, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>5. Bansud, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>6. Bongabong, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>7. Roxas, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>8. Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro</li> <li>9. Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Caluya, Antique</li> </ol>
---	--

**Effects to Communities and the Environment**

In MIMAROPA, a total of 10,362 families (48,885 individuals) have been affected, along with 15 Marine Protected Areas affected across Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria and Bongabong in Oriental Mindoro.

In Region VI, a total of 569 families (2,129 individuals) were affected, with 10 families (30 individuals) already evacuated.

Since 02 March 2023, there were observed fish kill and seeping of industrial fuel oil reaching the surrounding water bodies of Oriental Mindoro and Romblon, including mangrove areas and marine protected areas as a result of the oil spill.

Strong odor was noticeable during the conduct of water sampling along the coast of Tablas Strait, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. Black sticky substance was found within the shoreline of Brgys. Calima, Buhay na Tubig, and Bacawan in Pola, Oriental Mindoro while presence of oil film was observed in the coastal waters of Brgy. Lumangbayan, Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro.

Based on assessment by the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), the coastal and marine habitats in Pinamalayan and Bansud have generally less impacted coastal ecosystems compared to the barangays in Pola. Nevertheless, trails of the oil spill have been observed off-shore in some of the Barangays in Pinamalayan and Bansud to which containment measures can be applied in order to prevent it from reaching the shores of these municipalities and in preparation for the possible change of wind direction in the following weeks.

**III. ACTIONS TAKEN**

**DENR Task Force**

- DENR issues daily Department Statements / Press Statements to provide regular updates to the public.
- On 01 March 2023, the DENR Secretary, together with Key Officials from the Central Office, Regional Office MIMAROPA, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO) and Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) met with Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor and Naujan Municipality Mayor Henry Joel Teves to discuss the protection of marine and biodiversity resources and prevent further impacts.

In the afternoon, the DENR joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Council Meeting of Oriental Mindoro PDRRMC and coordinated with Petron and Shell to deploy equipment including oil spill booms. DENR Task Force MT Princess Empress Oil Spill was created with Undersecretary Marilou Erni as the Task Force Commander.

- On 02 March 2023, at approximately 03:00 PM, the DENR Task Force organized a meeting with PCG, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO), and the Provincial Agriculture Office (PAO) for latest situation updates and to arrange the aerial assessment to be led by the DENR Secretary.

At approximately 04:00 PM, the DENR Secretary gave a video statement on the measures being taken by the Department based on the Strategic Action Plan of the Task Force.

The DENR Task Force has established linkage with the Incident Management Team to be jointly led by the Local Chief Executives, PCG and DENR using Unified Command approach.

The DENR Secretary authorized the mobilization of NAMRIA multibeam survey vessels to determine the exact location of the sunken vessel.

- On 03 March 2023, at approximately 7:00 AM, the Task Force led by the DENR Secretary departed Manila to conduct an aerial inspection of affected coastlines, and dialogue with local officials and the PCG in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. Present during the dialogue were Naujan Mayor Henry Joel Teves, Provincial Administrator, PDRRMO, BFAR, Municipal Agricultural Officer, DENR Undersecretary MGEN Augusto Dela Pena, DENR Undersecretary Carlos Primo David, DENR Assistant Secretary and concurrent Environmental management Bureau (EMB) Director Gilbert Gonzales, Dr. Fernando Siringan of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), PENRO, and MENROs.

At approximately 10:00 AM, the DENR Task Force, led by Undersecretary Erni, met with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) to discuss arrangements as to how the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) can augment the requirements for containment and cleanup.

The DENR Secretary departed Naujan, Oriental Mindoro at 10:15 AM and arrived at Villamor Airbase at approximately 11:00 AM. The DENR Secretary reported to the President at approximately 1:00 PM.

NAMRIA multibeam survey vessel, BRP Hydrographer Ventura, was mobilized to determine the exact location of the sunken vessel.

The DENR Secretary spoke with Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian at approximately 5:00 PM to coordinate a cash for work system for coastal cleanup.

The DENR Secretary reached out to Semirara at approximately 9:00 PM for coordination on cleanup in Caluya, Antique.

- On 04 March 2023, at approximately 7:30 AM, NAMRIA vessel BRP Hydrographer Ventura departed for Oriental Mindoro.

The DENR Secretary reached out to Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Benhur Abalos, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, Department of Health (DOH) OIC Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, Palawan Congressman Jose Alvarez, and Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Trenas for mobilization and health and safety of LGUs involved in coastal cleanup and anticipatory action in Northern Palawan and Guimaras Strait.

The DENR Secretary continued to coordinate with DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian and he relayed that the cash for work support is ready in Mindoro.

The DENR Secretary reached out to Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma on possible use of the Tulong Panghanapbuhay para sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program funds as recommended by Undersecretary Leones. The DENR received a positive response.

At approximately 5:00 PM, the DENR Task Force led by Undersecretary Erni met with the NDRRMC Task Force led by OCD MIMAROPA Regional Director Eugene Cabrera to discuss updates and progress, as well as resolve collective issues and concerns. There will be a joint mechanism for situation reporting by

the DENR, focusing on environmental matters, and the NDRRMC, for the overall report.

- On 05 March 2023, NAMRIA vessel BRP Hydrographer Ventura arrived early morning in Oriental Mindoro and gathered data before it was forced to return to Batangas due to rough seas.

The DENR Task Force led by Undersecretary Erni, together with Undersecretary Leones and other Regional officials, visited the Municipality of Pola, Oriental Mindoro. The team met various agency officials on the ground, including DOH OIC Undersecretary Vergeire following the ceremonial turn over of oxygen concentrators, drugs and medicines and other health emergency supplies and equipment. A dialogue was conducted with members of the local community. Present were the DENR Task Force, Oriental Mindoro Governor Bonz Dolor, DOH OIC Undersecretary Vergeire, and representatives from national agencies.

The Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) team arrived in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro to conduct a rapid assessment of affected coastal and marine habitats. In collaboration with UP MSI and UP Visayas, the team is currently developing strategies for rehabilitation, restoration, and regeneration of the affected ecosystems.

At approximately 4:00 PM, the DENR Secretary met the DENR Task Force via video teleconferencing to discuss situation updates and reiterate priorities for the Department. The contents of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCOP) 2019 was also discussed by the Task Force, in which the leadership role of the PCG in the overall incident management for oil spill was recognized.

- On 06 March 2023, Undersecretary Erni met with DENR MIMAROPA Regional Executive Director Lormelyn Claudio to finalize arrangements for the cash for work system and undertake preparations for the meeting with Governor Dolor.

At approximately 9:30 AM, Secretary Loyzaga and other members of the DENR Key Officials met with DSWD Secretary Gatchalian via video teleconferencing to discuss updates on the cash for work system as well as a system of managing donations to be received.

At approximately 12:30 PM, Secretary Loyzaga informed Governor Dolor that BRP Hydrographer Ventura has determined the location of the vessel and will require further verification.

The BMB Assessment Teams were deployed in the Municipality of Pola to assess the Biodiversity and Social Impact of the oil spill as well as to conduct aerial surveys to measure its impact area. A total of nine (9) Barangays were targeted to be assessed including: Misong, Tagumpay, Puting Cacao, Tiguihan, Bayanan, Zone 1, Zone II, Batuhan, and Calima.

- On 07 March 2023, at approximately 08:30 AM, the DENR Secretary, along with other Key Officials, visited Oriental Mindoro via Presidential Bell 412 aircraft. The Secretary met with Governor Dolor at Pola to discuss next steps following the confirmation of the vessel's location. Among the priorities are the conduct of assessment to determine the appropriate filing of charges. Further, Governor Dolor manifested that the implementation of cash for work should be coursed through the Provincial Government to ensure accountability and avoid duplication of efforts.

At approximately 04:00 PM, the DENR Task Force convened for situation reporting. The meeting was presided over by Undersecretary Leones wherein it was agreed that teams are expected to provide timely updates on the results of water and air sampling and testing. Further, there should be careful and swift handling of disposal of oil wastes.

The BMB deployed three (3) teams to thirteen (13) barangays in the Municipality of Pinamlayan and Bansud, Oriental Mindoro:

- Zone 1, Pinamalayan
- Papandayan, Pinamalayan
- Quinabigan, Pinamalayan
- Wawa, Pinamalayan
- Banilad, Pinamalayan
- Lumangbayan, Pinamalayan
- Ranzo, Pinamalayan
- Guinahawa, Pinamalayan

#### **DENR MIMAROPA, EMB MIMAROPA, PENRO Oriental Mindoro and CENROs**

- On 01 March 2023, preliminary investigation and water sampling commenced in collaboration with PCG, BFAR and the local government units.

At approximately 8:00 PM, Assistant Secretary Gilbert Gonzales together with DENR Regional Officials met with PCG and BFAR to discuss updates. PCG was requested for assistance in terms of boats and other logistical provisions.

- On 02 March 2023, water samples were collected along the coast of Tablas Strait, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

At approximately 9:00 AM, PENRO commenced cleanup operations in areas with spotted oil spill from the shoreline covering the barangays of Calima, Buhay na Tubig and Bacawan, Pola, Oriental Mindoro.

At 10:00 PM, the Regional Environmental Laboratory of EMB MIMAROPA Region released the Result of Analysis based on the water samples collected from the established sampling stations in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro and ground zero (oil spillage area) on 01 March 2023.

The water samples collected from ground zero and seven (7) sampling stations namely: Estrella, San Jose 1, San Jose Proper, Pitugo Beach, Papangkil Beach, Montemayor Proper, and Tujod Fish Sanctuary, show that the water quality greatly exceeded the parameters for Oil and Grease as required under DENR Administrative Order No. 2016-08.

- On 03 March 2023, EMB MIMAROPA continued to conduct water sampling within the province of Marinduque.
- On 04 March 2023, coordination was made with the UP MSI to develop trajectory models to forecast the track and transport of the slick.

Several coordination visits were also made with DSWD Secretary Gatchalian, Governor Dolor, Pinamalayan Mayor Baldos, Bongabong Mayor Malaluan and other key officials. Improvised spill booms using nets and coconut shingles were initiated to help Brgy. Misong in the Municipality of Pola.

Coordination has also been made with Coron, Palawan, in which it was found that the area was not affected by the oil spill as of the moment.

Air sampling was made using Tri-Gas Sampler at Brgy. Misong in Pola. The results shall be released within 2-3 days upon receipt of the samples at Optimal Laboratory, Lipa, Batangas.

- On 05 March 2023, DENR and EMB MIMAROPA, together with the PENRO and CENROs, facilitated proper hazardous waste management disposal at Brgy. Misong, Pola, Oriental Mindoro. Coordination has also been undertaken with accredited Treatment Storage and Disposal (TSD) facilities.
- On 06 March 2023, UP MSI released its updated Trajectory Model for the oil spill for March 07 to 12.



Usec Leones, together with EMB Region VI met with DOLE MIMAROPA for the profiling of possible volunteers for the cash for work program.

RED Claudio also met with Governor Dolor to discuss the updates for the cash for work as well as the clarification on the leadership role of the PCG as provided for in the NOSCOP.

In the afternoon, the teams from the DENR and EMB MIMAROPA facilitated the disposal of collected oil wastes.

- On 07 March 2023, the results of the ambient air sampling were released. The parameters for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) met the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Source Specific Air Pollutants from Industrial Sources/Operations under Republic Act 8749 otherwise known as The Philippine Clean Air Act.

Further, the list of households to join the cash for work program has been submitted to the Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro.

#### **DENR REGION VI, EMB REGION VI, PENRO Oriental Mindoro and CENROs**

- On 03 March 2023, initial coordination was made with the Local Government of Caluya, Antique for updates and the Semirara Mining and Power Corporation (SMPC) for possible assistance.
- On 04 March 2023, EMB Region commenced planning for the conduct of inspection and water sampling. The installation of provisional spill booms made of locally available materials was also conducted.

EMB Region VI also attended the meeting with OCD Region VI and concerned agencies to discuss situation updates.

In response to the request for assistance, SMPC has provided 50 drums, 100 sacks, and fabricated rakes and spades for the cleanup to the Barangay Tinugboc Oil Spill Response Team.

- On 05 March 2023, based on water sampling, Brgys. Semirara and Tinogbog were found to be highly affected with the oil spillage. The Sampling Team also identified sites for Brgy. Algeria for possible contamination and comparison.

At approximately 11:31 AM, initial sampling was conducted on Station 1: Sitio Banwa, Brgy. Semirara. Based on observations, Patches of oil sheens were seen on rock surfaces. Presence of traces of oil was also seen on dried seagrass lining the shoreline. Oil is observed to be washed through wave action. No hauling of oil contaminated debris has been observed

EMB Region VI also participated in the PDRRMC Meeting of Antique. The Council has been updated about the monitoring teams deployed by EMB in Semirara island. Requests for air and sea assets for transport have been made due to rough sea conditions.

- On 06 March 2023, the EMB Monitoring Team completed the sampling and site monitoring activity for the ten (10) identified sites in the island. Sitio Sabang, Brgy. Tinogboc, Semirara Island was observed to be the most affected out of the three barangays in the island. Seen on-site were six (6) units drums (200 liter capacity) full of collected oil and one (1) unit containing approximately 40 liter (1/5 of the drum) and 27 sacks containing oil contaminated sand.

Cleanup operations also resumed upon availability of PPEs from SMPC.

A meeting between DENR and EMB Region VI was conducted for the deployment of Rapid Assessment Team.

A total of ninety (90) individuals for possible enrollment for the cash for work program were identified by MENRO Caluya for endorsement to DOLE Region VI.

- On 07 March 2023, preparations were undertaken for the cash for work program for Semirara Island. Further, Regional Executive Director Levino Durna prepared to depart for Semirara Island.

#### **IV. WAYS AHEAD**

1. Determine high-risk impact areas that need urgent protection
2. Sustain efforts for area assessments, water sampling, and air monitoring
3. Continue working with the DOH on required PPEs for coastal cleanup, and in developing Information and Education Campaigns (IEC) regarding health risks associated with the oil spill
4. Facilitate and expedite the assessments on the impact of oil spill on fish, fisheries, and marine tourism and to review standing moratoriums in each sector;
5. Coordinate with BFAR and DOT on the conduct of impact assessments and the provision of guidelines on the issuances of fishing and tourism moratoriums, respectively;
6. Coordinate in securing availability of transporters and Treatment, Storage and Disposal (TSD) facilities to treat waste oil and oil contaminated wastes.

7. Initiate coordination with private organizations, development partners, academe, and members of civil society who signified intent to provide support in the emergency response.
8. Determine the estimated monetary value of potential damages incurred by the oil spill;
9. Finalize and execute arrangements with the DSWD, DILG, and DOLE on the augmentation for the cash-for-work scheme for the cleanup teams;
10. Ensure collaboration with other government agencies and organizations to perform respective mandates and functions in accordance with the NOS COP 2019, highlighting the leadership role of the PCG; and
11. Undertake review and consultation with EMB Regional Offices, PCG and other stakeholders to possibly issue Notices of Violation to accountable parties, in accordance with Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act, among other rules, regulations and policies.

\*\*\*