Maritime casualties

Real and potential risks

PLATE 10

Reference points

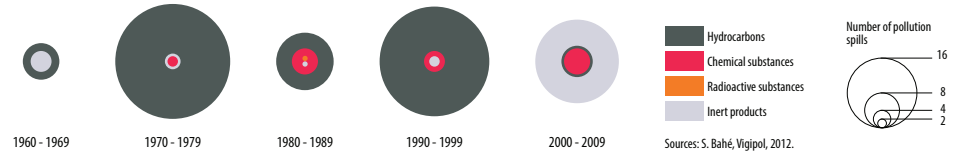
349 maritime casualties recorded from 1960 to 2009 including:

108	88	153
Casualties causing a spills	Shipwrecks without spill	Casualties without spill

Types of pollution

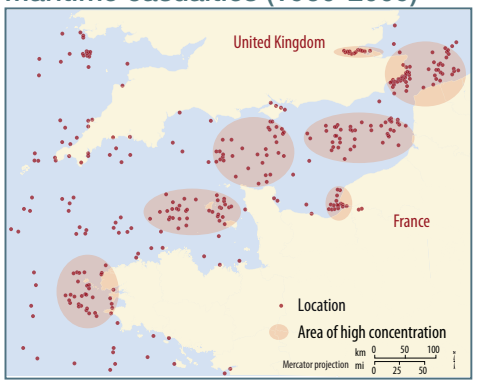
60.2 %	14.8 %	0.9 %	24.1 %
Hydrocarbons	Chemical substances	Radioactive substances	Inert products

Spills by type and decade



Sources: S. Bahé, Vigipol, 2012.

Maritime casualties (1960-2009)



Tomorrow's risks

Increase in maritime traffic

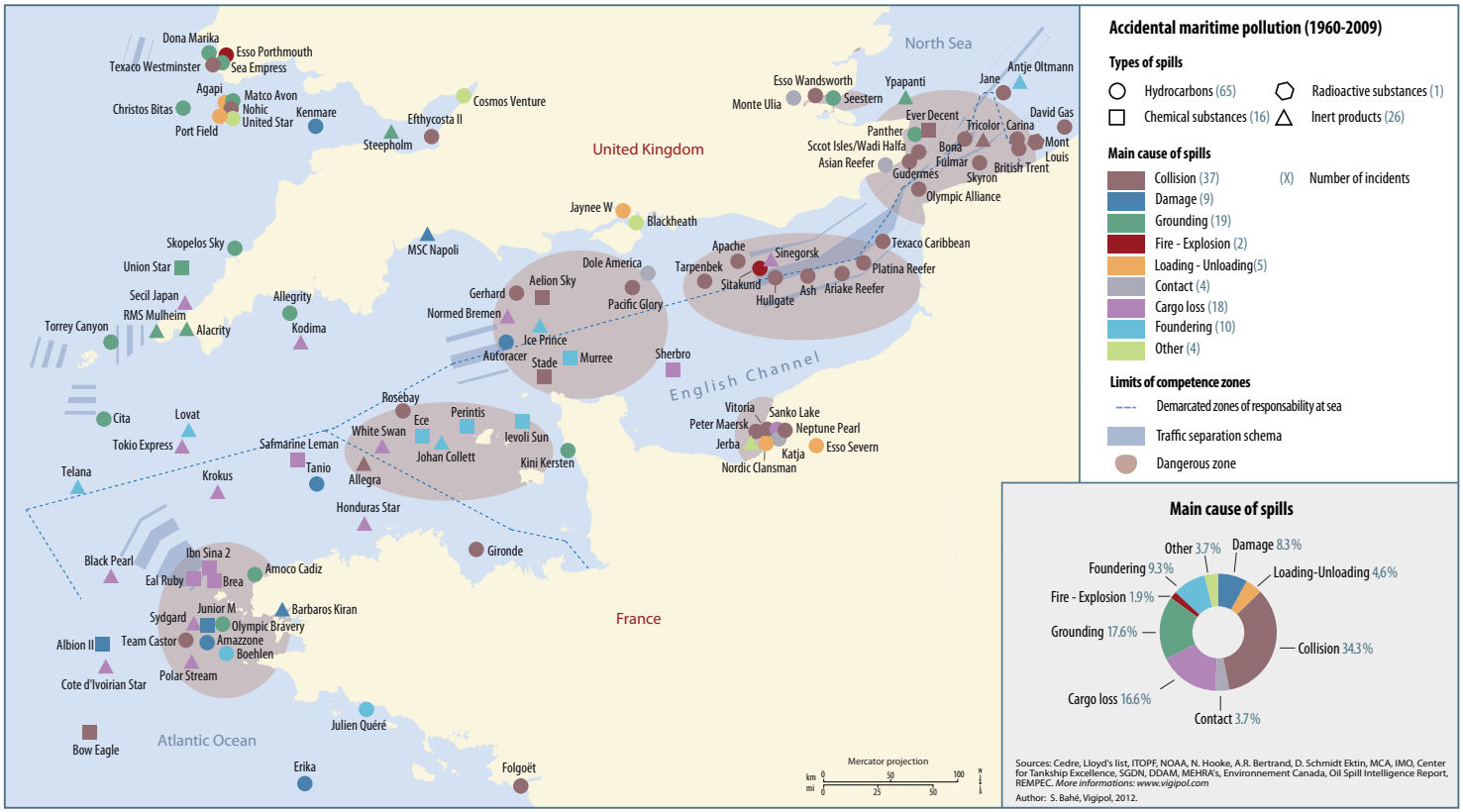
- More ships in transit through the Channel
- More dangerous goods transported
- Greater health risk of danger to coastal populations

Gigantic size of container ships

- Huge cargo losses
- Insufficient capacity of current tugboats
- Increased expense of managing maritime casualties
- Increased need for short sea shipping

Greater congestion of maritime activities

- Conflicting interests and uses
- More obstacles to navigation



Accidental maritime pollution (1960-2009)

Types of spills

- Hydrocarbons (65)
- Chemical substances (16)
- Radioactive substances (1)
- Inert products (26)

Main cause of spills

(X) Number of incidents

- Collision (37)
- Damage (9)
- Grounding (19)
- Fire - Explosion (2)
- Loading - Unloading (5)
- Contact (4)
- Cargo loss (18)
- Foundering (10)
- Other (4)

Limits of competence zones

- Demarcated zones of responsability at sea
- Traffic separation schema
- Dangerous zone

Main cause of spills

Sources: Cedre, Lloyd's list, ITOPF, NOAA, N. Hooke, A.R. Bertrand, D. Schmidt Ektin, MCA, IMO, Center for Tankship Excellence, SGDN, DDAM, MEHRA's, Environnement Canada, Oil Spill Intelligence Report, REMPEC. *More informations: www.vigipol.com*

Author: S. Bahé, Vigipol, 2012.

The density of maritime traffic, the making navigation difficult conditions and the multiple other ways in which the sea is used, means that the Channel is very accident-prone (some 349 accidents having been recorded over the past fifty years (i.e. 7 per annum on average). Admittedly, given that 430 ships enter or leave the Channel each day, the total number of accidents recorded may seem low by comparison. But these accidents cause some one hundred different types of associated pollution, on varying scales, including, for example two of the world's worst oil spills (Torrey Canyon and Amoco Cadiz).

Over recent decades, the frequency of hydrocarbon pollution has decreased sharply thanks to measures that have been taken to prevent accidents and to prepare for coping with any pollution. Central to this strategy, were the putting in place of three traffic separation schemes (TSSs), the surveillance of maritime traffic by the CROSS and MRCC centres, the creation of the Mancheplan, introducing towing and procedures for hosting ships in difficulty, joint Franco-British exercises and so on. In addition, there are European measures (the setting up of the European Maritime Safety Agency, strengthening of ship inspection rules, stronger cooperation between Member States ...) as well as other international measures (compulsory declaration of hazardous products transported in TSSs, crew safety ...).

Despite the reduction in risk of hydrocarbons being spilled into the sea, the danger of maritime pollution remains. For example, chemical pollution first occurred in the 1980s, followed in the 1990s by pollution by inert products – such as wood or the multitude of diverse and varied non-hazardous products that containers can transport. Each type of pollution calls for different management approaches and constant adaptation by the sea and land authorities. Chemical pollution is undoubtedly the most worrying type in the years to come, for, with over 354 million tons of hazardous products transported in 2009, a maritime accident, beyond saving the life of crew members, will swiftly have major consequences for the health of coastal populations, the local environment and the economic activities of the whole area. This suggests that the risk of accidental maritime pollution is not diminishing, but simply changing its nature and becoming more complex to handle.

No part of the Channel is truly out of harm's way. That said, the highest density of accidents have occurred in approaching the entrances to the main ports or estuaries, as well as around the TSSs. These areas can therefore be considered particularly at risk.

Maritime safety therefore remains a major priority for the Channel. It is one of those over-riding issues where cooperation between France and the UK continues to be crucial if surrounding environments, people and activities are to be protected.