

# New report examines the safety of using dispersants in oil spill clean ups

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A multi-disciplinary team of scientists has issued a series of findings and recommendations on the safety of using dispersal agents in oil spill clean-up efforts in [a report published](#) this month by the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine.

By measuring the level of a leading dispersal agent, dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, in sea life following the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the team was able to establish how long the chemical lingers and what health effects it has on various organisms. The scientists found the risks associated with using DOSS were minimal, the team found that in areas where oil concentrations in water were more than 100 milligrams per liter did increase the toxicity, though they noted oil concentrations are typically much lower than that in most spills.

Terry Hazen, the University of Tennessee-Oak Ridge National Laboratory Governor's Chair for Environmental Biotechnology, who is known for his work on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill recovery efforts, co-authored the report.

"One of the biggest concerns in [cleanup efforts](#) is the effect the spill has on people's health and livelihood," Terry Hazen, University of Tennessee faculty a University of Tennessee said. "It's not just that oil itself is harmful and potentially even flammable, but you have to be careful what kind of chemicals you expose crews to while trying to clean or contain the oil."

The researchers also discovered that the testing methodology used after spills is typically so varied that it is hard to draw broad conclusions when comparing different spills.

To combat this, the team recommends the creation of some form of standardized testing that would enable data to be correlated from one [spill](#) to the next.

**More information:** The Use of Dispersants in Marine Oil Spill Response, (2019). [DOI: 10.17226/25161](https://doi.org/10.17226/25161)

Provided by University of Tennessee at Knoxville

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