

Newly licensed UK technology will improve marine oil spill response

- UK's Maritime Coastguard Agency emergency oil spill response technology now commercially available world-wide
- CONVERT400 is a new, cost-effective, future-proof solution to reduce environmental damage caused by oil spills at sea.

London, 26 January 2021 - Agile Spray Response Ltd has been granted the Export Sales Licence to manufacture, market and sell CONVERT400, the HM Government Maritime Coastguard Agency's (MCA) chosen oil dispersant spray system (ODSS). CONVERT400's design improves accessibility to and affordability of airborne spray response strategies used to disperse oil spills quickly and effectively, around the world.

CONVERT400 does not require a dedicated aircraft or the associated annual costs of its maintenance, storage and personnel. Instead, CONVERT400 is 'rolled on and rolled off' a cargo Boeing 737, as required, which eliminates the need for countries and companies to maintain fixed aviation assets to manage the risk of offshore oil spills. The Boeing 737 type is among the most widely used cargo aircraft and CONVERT400 can be used by existing in-country aircraft when they have been modified for both roles.

CONVERT400 is designed and developed to deal with the impact of oil spills on coastlines and marine ecology around the world. It is integrated with the UK Government's export policy and is available to all global markets.

"CONVERT400 has been developed and extensively tested by the UK MCA to ensure that it meets all current international requirements for the successful management of oil spills in the marine environment. The overriding aim is to reduce the impact of oil spills on coastlines and marine ecology in a financially efficient manner and make the system accessible to all nations." said Phil Cole, Agile Spray Response CEO.

The successful management and dispersal of oil spills is a time critical procedure where the speed of response is vital to minimise environmental harm. Agile Spray Response has achieved a rapid response solution by forming a partnership with an 'in-nation' airline which is already operating revenue-earning cargo flights. This makes the need for a dedicated aircraft obsolete.

"The advantage of CONVERT400 is that in three hours the system can be installed in a Boeing 737, loaded with dispersant and be able to start spraying immediately. The commercial advantages are key for this technology to be made available to a greater number of countries and organisations," he added.

Using standard cargo Boeing 737-400 aircraft, the MCA has chosen CONVERT400 as its environmental aerial spray technology because it will deal with oil spills efficiently and effectively. The agency has committed its support to Agile Spray Response for overseas sales of the system and service, which offers significant cost-reduction, increased capability and better performance over traditional oil spill management using aerial spray.

The MCA spokesperson said: “Agile Spray Response has been granted the Export Licence for CONVERT400, and its future evolutions, to make the system available to all countries keen to protect their coasts against oil pollution resulting from spills. The cost of that protection has been significantly reduced by the development of CONVERT400 and we are confident that making this technology available to other countries is a positive step for the environment and for the national economies which choose this system.”

Additional information:

- Agile Spray Response’s partner company RVL Group, working with the MCA, designed, managed and carried out the extensive and comprehensive system test programme. This included advanced timed loading and installation trials, and a rigorous scientific methodology to demonstrate the system’s effectiveness. Live spray testing using Boeing 737-400 aircraft was conducted offshore using water instead of dispersant. The tests proved conclusively that CONVERT400 works, is effective and is cost-effective.
- CONVERT400 uses standard cargo pallet and floor dimensions making it entirely compatible with existing aviation ground logistics and operations. It can be adapted for other types of aircraft as required.
- A significant proportion of large oil spills in the marine environment will benefit the most from aerial spray using dispersants. Booms and skimmers generally work well in harbours and similar small areas where aerial spraying is not practical. Burning as a solution is rare because it can be perceived as being environmentally and politically risky, and must be contained to a specific and limited area.
- Aerial spray of dispersant suspends oil in the upper 10 metres of the water column. This allows it to be further dispersed by the energy in the ocean and degrade through a natural process, away from coastlines where it would otherwise be driven by wind, waves and tidal flow.
- Agile Spray Response works with Southampton-based SpillConsult, a technical consultancy and training organisation, with global experience in emergency and oil spill response. The company’s multi-disciplinary team of consultants and associates has attended in excess of 200 major international incidents between them, including Deepwater Horizon and the Exxon Valdez.
- Agile Spray Response is backed by the UK’s largest and most active growth capital investor, BGF. In the past nine years, BGF has invested approximately £2.5bn in UK based businesses, and is a champion of UK design, manufacturing and engineering.