11.4   Establishment of an Emergency Response Plan

An effective Emergency Response Plan (ERP) shall be an essential element of the DMAT'S strategy for dealing with operational emergencies. Included in this should be a system for avoiding, or at worst, minimizing pollution during emergencies, damage to property and safeguarding public.

It is important in any emergency to respond quickly to correct the situation, learn from the experience and restore confidence. An ERP will ensure positive action is taken and duration of the problem is minimized. Important factors are co-ordination and teamwork and all DMAT staff will have to familiarize themselves with the Plan so that they fully recognize their own roles within a team when dealing with any incident.

An ERP should enable Contractors to respond to incidents in an efficient and timely manner. In this respect procedures should:

a) Be comprehensive, yet short and easy to read
b) Be simple, with a minimum of bureaucracy

ERP need to take account of the DMAT'S operational arrangements and will vary from one organization to another. However, an ERP should in general address the following issues:

i.   Communication strategy that identifies, for each level of failure, the communication that is to occur, i.e. with the emergency services, local authorities and other organizations concerned, communications between the organization and customer and internally and dealing with the press.

ii.   Management systems, including systems that give an early warning of problems, pollution management, alerting staff on site and clean-up procedures and follow-up reviews;

iii.   Information, including contingency plans and access to reliable and appropriate information/databases and resources, etc.

iv.   Training, the above elements are all worthless unless the people concerned know how to use them. Any site ERP will depend for its effectiveness of staff training. All staff and contractors working on site should be made aware of the plan and should know their role if an incident occurs. Exercises should be carried out periodically to familiarize staff with the operation of the plan and to test its effectiveness and records of staff training should be maintained.

v.   Review and follow-up systems of ERP, why a failure occurred and to ensure that there is no repeat. Any failure discovered through the exercises should be managed through the QA corrective action system. In order for the plan to remain effective, it is vital that it is regularly reviewed and that any significant changes are reflected in a revised plan. Ensure that revised copies are sent to all plan holders and that old versions are destroyed.

Finally, the document shall be retained by all personnel, in a simplified version that defines their personal responsibility. All personnel shall be retained in the system, and the communication strategy shall be part of exercising ERP.