

Seaskimmer--

BP Builds Oil Recovery Device

The first practical system for containing and recovering oil spills in open sea conditions has been developed by British Petroleum, the Company has announced.

The system called Vikoma is being given its first public showing at the International Conference and Exposition on the Prevention and Control of Oil Spills being held in Washington D. C.

BP's Vikoma system uses a specially-designed boom which prevents spilt oil from spreading over the sea. Once contained, the Vikoma Seaskimmer picks up the oil on rotating discs and pumps it to a container.

This skimming device is currently at the experimental prototype stage, but has already recovered at the rate of about 100 tons per hour during tests at BP's Sunbury Research Centre and the Department of Trade and Industry's Warren Springs Laboratory.

The Seaskimmer is capable of riding 6 ft. seas without the pick-up discs lifting from the sea surface.

As an alternative to the use of Seaskimmer, the oil can be dispersed using an agent such

as BP 110X. Dispersal is more efficient when the oil spill is confined by the boom.

The Vikoma Seapack is a glass reinforced plastic hull containing inflation equipment and 1,600 ft. of boom. The boom design incorporates two main chambers, the upper one (27 inches in diameter) filled with air and the lower one (17 inches in diameter) filled with water.

The large volume of these chambers provides stability at the air/sea interface and ensures that oil does not leak past the barrier.

Seapack is towed down wind in the path of the oil spill and the boom is automatically paid out and inflated to form a 'U'-shaped wind trap.

The 'trap' is controlled by drogues at each end to move at a lower speed than the oil and the spill is eventually contained entirely within the boom. The total laying operation takes about twenty minutes.

It is estimated that a single boom can contain 1,000 tons of oil and several booms can be deployed to deal with larger spills. The boom has been used successfully in waves 6 ft. high and a fully deployed boom has ridden out a force 7 gale.

The Seapack is now commercially available and a production version of the Seaskimmer will be available by the end of the year.