



## “LEAVE ALONE” or NATURAL CLEAN-UP

N 01

### SCOPE

Substrates: all types  
Pollution: light to moderate  
Pollutant: all types  
Sea: with or without tides



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

N/A

### DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPLE

Natural clean-up is the result of natural physical and biochemical processes taking place along the coastline, especially involving wave and current energy, adhesion of oil to organic particles, bacterial and micro-organism activity, photo-oxidation, etc.

The so-called "leave alone" option, or non-response, should be viewed as a technique in the same way as any other response technique. It should be considered systematically in the event of a small spill in areas where response may be more harmful than the oil, due entirely to biological biotope sensitivity (reefs and mangroves for instance). It is all the more justified for a site that has not been heavily oiled and that has a good self-cleaning potential and that otherwise may present a safety hazard for responders (very wave beaten rocky headland or a barrier reef, for instance).

### CONDITIONS OF USE

Pollution: all types of pollutant (if it is a small spill).  
Substrate: all types.  
Site: very exposed, difficult to access, or ecologically fragile.

### IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Physical: in the event of major accumulations, risk of formation of a crust of stones, for instance, causing the stones to be unable to absorb the shock of waves, and therefore no longer protecting against erosion.  
Biological: persistence of the toxic effects of oil must not be underestimated; such effects will last for a variable amount of time and will need to be compared with the effects caused by response.

### PERFORMANCE

Yield: N/A

Waste: N/A

The persistence of the pollutant is mainly dependent on its nature and the extent to which it traps, infiltrates or burrows in addition to the degree of exposure of the site to waves and other weathering agents.

### OBSERVATIONS

- Often the best solution on sensitive sites.
- Only concerns small spills.
- Will require surveying of the affected size and monitoring of the pollution.
- Do not underestimate the persistence of some pollutants or the efficiency of natural clean-up, especially when the sea hardly ever reaches the heights required to clean the oiled surfaces.