

International Warning- and Alarm Plan Rhine

Reported incidents 2008



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Warning and Alarm Plan Rhine Reported incidents 2008

WAP-reports 2008

1. Introduction

WAP objectives

The objective of the Warning and Alarm Plan (WAP) is, to pass on reports on sudden pollutions with substances noxious to water in the Rhine watershed, if the amount and concentration may detrimentally impact water quality and/or biocoenosis of the Rhine and to warn the authorities in charge of fighting accidents.

The WAP distinguishes between warnings, information and search reports.

The International Main Alert Centres (IHWZ) issue **warnings** in cases of water pollution incidents implying substances noxious to water, if the amounts or concentrations concerned may detrimentally impact the water quality of the Rhine or drinking water supply along the Rhine and/or are liable to raise great public interest.

Information is issued in order to give the IHWZ objective, factual and reliable information independent of the media. Furthermore, the IHWZ inform all Rhine bordering countries in cases of excesses of guidance values. As a precautionary measure, information is also passed on to the drinking water works.

Search reports are issued, in order find the polluter of the Rhine in cases not located within the area of responsibility of an IHWZ.

2. Summary of the reports in 2008

Total number of reports issued in 2008: **50**

Number of warnings: **1**

Number of information reports: **49**

Number of search reports: **16**

(Since all search reports were also passed on as information reports, they are not included in the total number of reports issued.)

The total number of reports includes the following number of reports on oil and on chemical pollution:

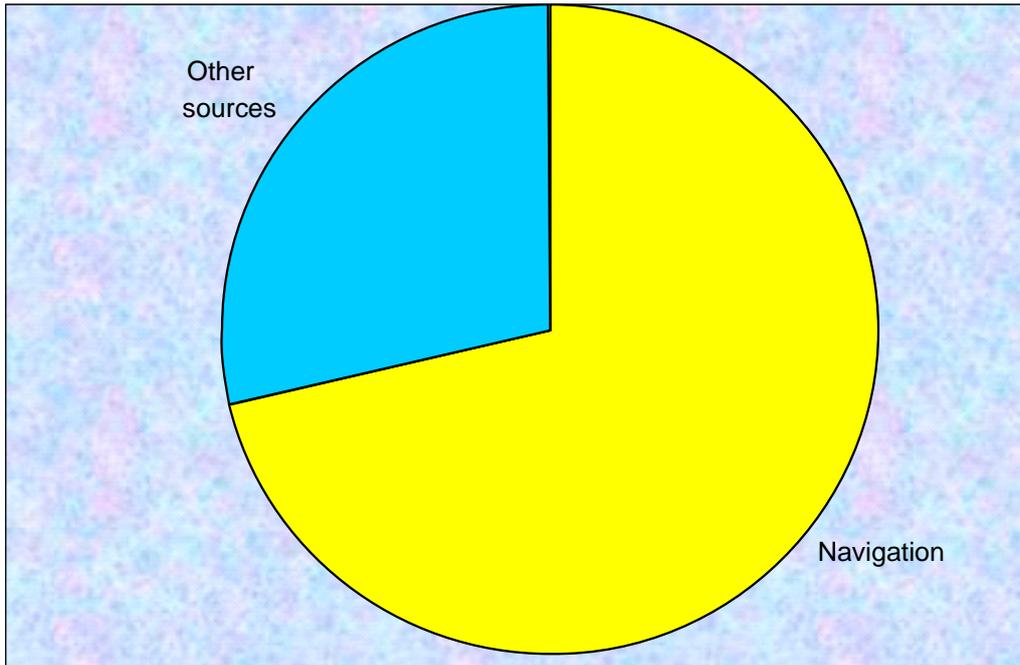
Number of oilfilms: **0**

Number of chemical pollution reports: **50**

Among them pure MTBE/ETBE waves: **11**

MTBE/ETBE waves mixed with other substances: **8**

If the waves of volatile substances mostly due to navigation are summarized, almost 80 % the reports issued are due to navigation. The others are due to land-based discharges which were normally revealed by monitoring stations.

Graph 1: Reports caused by navigation (yellow) and other sources (blue)

The biocoenosis of the Rhine was not endangered at any time. However, compared to the previous year, the number of reports has increased. As chart 1 illustrates, in particular navigation is concerned.

In the Netherlands, the intake of raw water from the Rhine for drinking water production purposes was stopped several times.

In spite of strong involvement from sides of the river police, the possibilities for determining the polluter remain restricted.

WAP and the media interest

In March 2008, dichlorobenzene was discharged at a ships mooring. Media became interested in this case and it was requested that relevant cases should, as a matter of principle, be published within short time.

A wave of pollutants which was first detected in the Bad Honnef monitoring station (information report no. 41) in October originated from the production of the biocide Dazomet by BASF in Ludwigshafen. In water, the agent quickly disintegrates into methylisothiocyanate (MITC). The pollutant reached the Rhine via a cooling water discharge of the chemical plant, after cooling water from the Dazomet production came into contact with the wastewater flow of the same plant due to leakage caused by corrosion. Bio-test results of the monitoring station immediately downstream the point of discharge prove that acute danger of the biocoenosis of the Rhine was given at no time. The print press and television extensively covered the incident. Politicians on the federal level and on the level of the Landtag dealt with the issue. The close cooperation between the competent authorities along the Rhine in charge of close and intensive surveillance and the WAP proved successful.

3. Long-term development of WAP reports

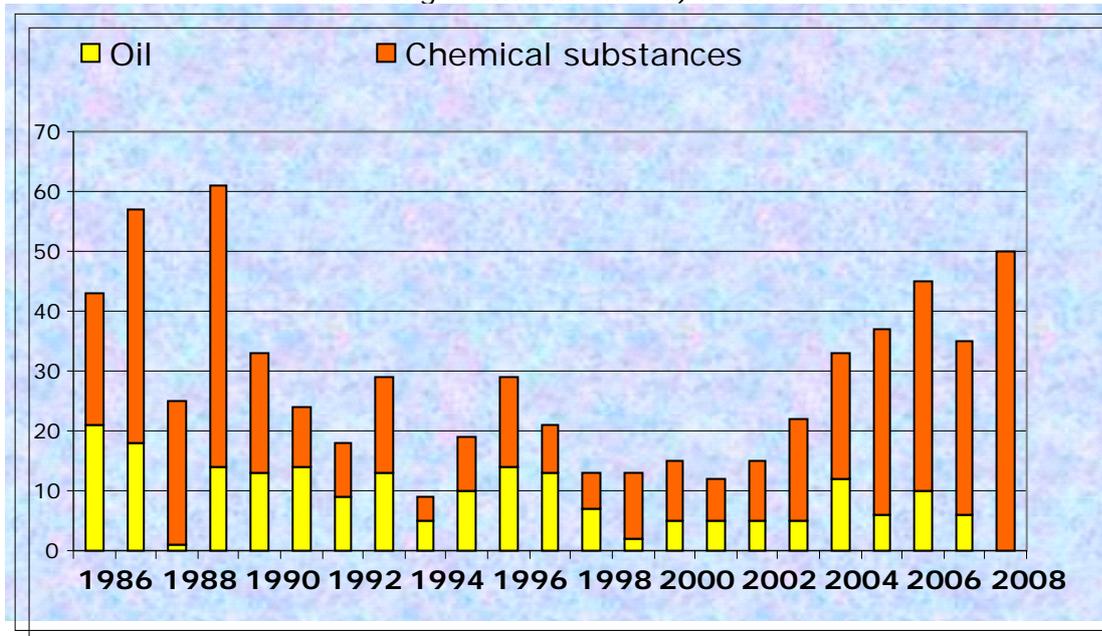
The overall number of WAP-reports (information and warnings; diagram 1) has sunk from the end of the 80s to the end of the 90s. Until 2002, its number was constant: 12 reports (annually on average one warning). Since 2003, the number of reports, particularly of reports concerning chemical substances, is again increasing and has, so far, reached its peak with 50 reports in 2008. The changed state of reports from 2003 on is in particular due to the improvement of the possibilities of analysis in some monitoring stations. In 2008, as in the preceding years, almost all reports were issued by the international warning centre R6.

It is urgent that the often unknown but presumably restricted number of polluters from navigation is, in future stopped.

In 2008, one warning was issued. This warning did not concern a very relevant case, as the biocoenosis of the Rhine was not in danger.

90 % of the reports are due to monitoring results at the monitoring stations and were not reported by the polluting companies or ships.

Graph 2: Development of the number of WAP reports (divided into reports concerning chemicals and oil) from 1986 to 2008.



Map of the international main warning centres

