



Shipwreck of MV Wakashio

Huge relief for Mauritians and for the Mauritian tourism industry

Mauritian authorities announced that the tanks of the MV Wakashio, which ran aground two weeks ago off the South East coast of the island, had been emptied of their heavy fuel payload with a small amount of residual oil remaining in the engine room. Salvage teams have thus been successful in avoiding the worst. Damage to the lagoons, the shores and the ecosystem remains localised. These constitute a major relief for Mauritians and the Mauritius tourist industry.

Much of the fuel oil spilled in some parts of Mauritius's south east lagoons were removed and disposed of in secured locations. Efforts to contain the spill are being led by Mauritian authorities in collaboration with around 100 experts from all over the world. The MV Wakashio broke into two on 15 August. The rear half of the ship remains on the reefs and the front half will be towed away. There has been no further spillage at this stage.

There has been a strong mobilization of Mauritians to support public authorities, the private sector, experts and NGOs in operations to contain the spread and remove the heavy oil already spilled in the lagoon. Significant progress has been made in recent days, which continued to motivate response teams to take prompt actions.

Impact of the oil spill is localized in the south eastern region of the island over an estimated 10 to 12 kilometres of coastline leaving the remaining 310 kilometres unaffected. Encouraging reports confirm that even major beaches of the south east as well as the Blue Bay Marine Park are unaffected. Beaches and lagoons on most of the south and east part of the island as well as in the north and west have not been affected. This is encouraging for hotels, resorts and other tourism operators as they stay prepared to welcome tourists again when borders reopen after they were closed earlier this year due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

Some facts about the MV Wakashio spillage:

- The MV Wakashio was carrying a payload of 4,180 metric tons of heavy oil.
- As from 06 August, heavy oil started leaking from one cracked oil tank of the Wakashio. The spillage stopped on 09 August after 500 metric tons of oil were pumped out of the cracked tank.
- An estimated 800 metric tons of oil leaked in the sea and lagoons.
- 3,184 metric tons of oil were pumped out of the tanks of the bulk carrier.
- Around 884 metric tons of oil liquid waste, 524 metric tons of solid waste sludge and contaminated debris, and 416 cubic meters of saturated artisanal booms have been collected as at mid-day on Monday August 17, 2020.
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- An estimated 10 to 12 kilometres of coastline and surrounding lagoons were most hit by the spillage situated in the south eastern part of the island.
- More than 310 kilometres of beaches and coastline (where most of the hotels and resorts are situated) representing more than 96% of the island's coastline remain unaffected.

