


## Here a few ways to clean the oil spill...is anybody listening?

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Oil spills at the sea and beach  
Romani Agarwal

CHENNAI: There has been a lot of debate surrounding the cleanup process of the oil spillage at Ennore. S Vincent, dean of research at Loyola College has many suggestions to clean the shoreline effectively.

Speaking to City Express, he said the conventional method of using a bucket and removing the oil will take too long to clean the beach. "The pollutant might stay long for two or three years and the marine life will be destroyed," he said.

To avoid this, sorbents or sponges can be placed on the surface of the spillage affected area. These sorbents will suck and absorb the oil from the surface of the water. "We can also burn the oil on the site where the spillage occurred. The burning has to be done quite promptly before the oil spill can spread to a larger area," he said adding that the disadvantage of such an on-site burning is that the exhaust contains toxic particles that can cause damage to the oceanic air in addition to marine life-forms.

Skimming, and also fertilisers can be used to disperse oil spillage in the water. "Fertilisers help to hasten the growth of micro-organisms which help to diffuse the components of the oil spill in the water. In skimming, oil is removed with the help of tools and equipment from the surface of the water. But please remember that only lighter oils can be separated and removed from the water in this method. This is because the density of oil is lighter than that of water."

The other methods include hot water and a huge force of manual labour and massive technological aid. "People in the coastal areas can remove the oil spills by using simple tools like spades and shovels. You can also use cranes and tractors to clean the beach."

He also highlighted that biological components or agents like bacteria and other micro-organisms will hasten bio-degradation. "The components of oil can be broken down by bacteria and other micro organisms into harmless substances such as fatty acids and carbon dioxide. This is called biodegradation. This can be sped up by adding nitrogen and phosphorous which stimulate growth of microorganisms," he said.

However, he did clarify that the effectiveness depends on whether the ground treated has sand or pebbles. "Biological methods could take few months but the other alternative methods could take hardly a week to show effect."

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