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The Philippines ‘racing against time’ to avert nation’s worst oil spill

[Sam Chambers](#)

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Philippine Coast Guard

The race is on just outside the Philippine capital to avert the worst oil spill in the country’s history.

A 22-year-old tanker carrying industrial fuel oil capsized and sank 3.6 nautical miles off Lamao Point in the Philippines due to rough seas early on Thursday morning as a typhoon passed by.

The incident which involved the Philippine-flagged *TerraNova* tanker, carrying 1,494 tonnes of industrial fuel oil, has led to a large oil spill, according to a statement by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). The tanker capsized around 1:10 am local time while the vessel was on its way to Iloilo port with one crewmember dying.

The subsequent spill could reach the country’s capital, Manila, which is just 10 km away from where the ship went down. A slick has already been detected, growing rapidly to around 8 km.

According to Equasis data, the 1,415 dwt vessel is owned and managed by the Philippines-based company Shogun Ships.

The PCG has deployed three vessels to augment the ongoing oil spill response operations. The vessels will start the application of oil dispersants to mitigate the impact, especially during the period when siphoning is being prepared. Harbor Star Shipping Services has been appointed as the salvor.

An operational target of seven days has been set to finish siphoning the oil from the sunken tanker with a spokesperson for the PCG warning that if all the ship's cargo leaked, it would become the worst oil spill in the country's history.

"We are racing against time and we will try to do our best to contain it immediately and stop the fuel from leaking," he said.

"There is a big danger that Manila will be affected, even the shoreline of Manila if the fuel [leaks] because it is within Manila Bay," the spokesperson added.

The vessel sunk only 34 m so the siphoning ops will not be very technical and, according to Philippine authorities, can be done quickly to protect the waters of Bataan and Manila Bay.

Last year the Philippines was hit by an oil spill after the product tanker [*Princess Empress*](#) sank with 800,000 litres of industrial fuel onboard.