

Another environmental disaster averted



Safmarine Agulhas on the rocks alongside East London harbour breakwater.

Another major environmental disaster has been averted, with FFS Refiners playing a key role again. The 16 800-ton Safmarine Agulhas ran aground on a sandbank and rocks next to the East London harbour breakwater on June 26, 2006. Some 660 tons of heavy fuel oil and 80 tons of diesel oil were removed from the stricken vessel by Smit Salvage and stored in the railway depot and in rail tankers on the break-

water. FFS was called in and a national effort was mounted, involving the company's facilities in Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Durban.

The first oil from the Agulhas was transported by road to the tank farm in Port Elizabeth. Hennie van der Walt, depot controller at FFS PE, managed the complex logistics operation that evolved.

"By July 31 we had received 390

tons of wet product in 12 road-tanker loads. As the oil arrived we drained off the free water and transported the product to FFS Cape Town for refining and recycling. FFS Cape Town sent a hydraulic pump to the PE depot to assist with offloading the very thick and cold oil that we soon named Marmite."

To speed up the process about half the recovered oil was transported to the FFS Teakwood Road refinery in Durban. No major spills were reported during the operation.

FFS personnel involved in the successful operation were Hennie van der Walt, Collen Dumana and Vukile Noncgazi of Port Elizabeth, Dave Sands and Veronica Thomas of Cape Town, and staff at the Durban factory.

In August 2005 bad weather claimed another victim off Cape Town when the Sealand Express dragged its anchor in Table Bay and grounded. About 3000 tons of bunker fuel was removed rapidly via a floating fuel line to a coastal tanker and discharged into the safety of the FFS bunker fuel tank farm in Cape Town harbour a few nautical miles away. ■