



Mauritius facing 'ecological disaster' from oil spill

August 10, 2020



The operator of a bulk carrier that ran aground off the coast of Mauritius has apologized, after for an oil spill that environmentalists warn is creating an ecological disaster.

1. On the coast of Mauritius, clear waters and pristine beaches that attract more than a million tourists each year are now saturated with oil.
2. Environmentalists are calling this an "ecological disaster" and on Sunday (August 9) the Japanese operator of a bulk carrier that ran aground said sorry.

Akiho Ono, executive vice president of Mitsui OSK Lines, said "we apologize profusely and deeply for the great trouble we have caused."

3. And that trouble could be widespread.
4. Reuben Pillay, director of virtual tour site reubsvision.mu, says the spill is next to Ile aux Aigrettes - a natural reserve with endemic and endangered species.

"There's the pink pigeon, there are giant tortoises, there's a tree there that's said to be 400 years old, and they've been trying - the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation has been trying to preserve things there and care for these endangered species but it's going to prove to be quite a challenge to protect them now, given the spill is just next to it."

5. The MV Wakashio hit a reef off the southeast coast of the East African island nation on July 25 but first started leaking oil on Thursday (August 6).

6. At least 1,000 tonnes of oil is estimated to have leaked from the ship onto the waters surrounding Mauritius so far.
7. The government declared an "environmental emergency" on Friday (August 7).
8. Japan is sending a six-person disaster relief team, and France - the island's former colonial power - will send specialist teams and equipment.