

UNITED KINGDOM SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKSAR) OPERATORS GROUP

REPORT OF MEETING OF 12 SEPTEMBER 2002

1. The minutes of the meeting of 8 April 2001 were agreed.
2. The Group were informed that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) had recently appointed a SAR prevention Manager with the intention of eventually forming a SAR prevention Branch. Initially the SAR prevention Manager would be making contact with other SAR organisations to establish areas of commonality and to look at ideas for innovative initiatives to SAR prevention. It was not intended that the MCA would act alone but would act in partnership with other SAR organisations to have a joined up approach. One of the main difficulties that had been encountered with previous SAR prevention initiatives was the lack of measurement of success. The Group agreed that any future projects should have a clear stated aim, with clear goals and a clear strategic definition.
3. The Group were appraised of the NORSEA incident which had recently occurred. One aspect of particular concern with the incident was that Suffolk Fire Brigade had been tasked to provide offshore firefighting cover which was provided, however if the incident had occurred a few weeks later the offshore firefighting provision would have been withdrawn. The Chairman had raised his concerns with the Secretary of State for Transport over the reduction of offshore firefighting facilities around the UK coast. It was noted that Cornwall County Fire Brigade had established a Working Group to look at the wider implications for the UK and would report to the UKSAR Strategic committee.
4. The final version of the UK Framework document was provided to the members of the Group for any last minute amendments. It was intended that the document would be amended on a regular basis to ensure that it was kept up to date.
5. The Communications Working Group were in the process of drawing up a UK Communications Plan.
6. The issue of using mobile phones to contact the SAR services was again raised by both the Inland Consultative Committee and Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee. There were also concerns raised about the increasing public perception that they would be rescued regardless of the location and circumstances.
7. The Group were informed that the MCA were in the process of developing a rescue boat code. It was noted that MCA legislation applied to both maritime and inland waters.
8. The development phase of the SAR risk methodology was about to be undertaken. The methodology would be a generic product which could be used to look a SAR risk in any location. It was intended that the first test of the methodology would be on the Mersey.

9. The final draft of the Inland Water Study was to be submitted to Ministers by the end of September.
10. The Group were concerned that members of the SAR services were increasingly becoming the subject of abusive behaviour from members of the public when attending incidents.
11. It was agreed that the Strategic Committee should meet only to review difficult issues or areas of national concern.