

UNITED KINGDOM SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKSAR) OPERATORS GROUP

REPORT OF MEETING OF 23 FEBRUARY 2004

1. The minutes of the meeting of 9 October 2003 were agreed.
2. The Group welcomed the new Chairman of the UKSAR Strategic Committee to the Group. The Group also welcomed the representative from the Air Ambulance Authority.
3. The Group discussed the revision of the UKSAR Framework Document, it was intended that the Drafting Working Group would reconvene to finalise the document. It was suggested that inland waterways should also be included within the Framework document and dovetailing this with the work of other groups e.g. National Water Safety Committee with a view to making the Framework Document a focal point for SAR and water safety.
4. A report was made on the progress of the SAR Communications Working Group. The availability of the Implementation and Control Document and the application form for access to the additional VHF channels on the UKSAR website had been working well. Concerns had been raised about the withdrawal of the Low band SRC by the end of 2005. It was thought that some teams may not be in a position to change to the High Band by the end of 2005. The implementation and Control document would be revised at the next meeting.
5. The Resource Working Group had not formally met since the last meeting but discussions were ongoing between the members of the Group. The Group had discussed the issue of SAR aircraft and Air Ambulances attending the same incidents.
6. The Inland Consultative Committee had met; one of the major issues which had been discussed was with regard to members of SAR teams being called to act as expert witnesses in court cases. It was suggested that it maybe appropriate for UKSAR to issue corporate guidance. The Group also discussed the routing of 999 calls to the appropriate rescue authority.
7. The Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee meeting had been held in early December: the Chairman had advised the Committee on a number of ongoing issues.
8. The UKSAR Satellite Communications Working Group had not met since the last Operators Group, however the Group would meet prior to the next joint COSPAS/SARSAT meeting.
9. The Group were provided with an update on the Firefighting at Sea project. The biggest single obstacle to the project was the issue of insurance for the members of the teams, this was being addressed. It was agreed that the deployment of the Maritime Incident Response Group would be considered as a primary SAR tasking.

10. The UKSAR website was active, the members of the Group were asked to provide contributions to the site and ideas and comments and suggestions on what they would like to see available on the site. The website had received a number of visits and queries were being generated via the site. A discussion board was being trialled as a way to find out what users would like to see on the site. Information on the use of the discussion board was available from the webmaster. The Group were asked how they would like to see the site develop.
11. The Group were provided with copies of the Scottish Mountain Safety Forum safety leaflet "Winter Essentials". The Group discussed ways in which funding could be sought for something similar for the whole of the UK.
12. The Group noted the excellent co-operation between the emergency services following the recent SAR incident off Morecambe Bay.
13. The RNLI were undertaking hovercraft trials on the Mersey.
14. The Group noted the Early Day Motion on potential funding sources for Mountain Rescue.
15. The Group were asked to consider the issue of helicopters for air transport purposes over land to transport fire fighting equipment for technical rescues which were not considered to be SAR.