

UNITED KINGDOM SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKSAR) OPERATORS GROUP

REPORT OF MEETING OF 30 OCTOBER 2001

1. The minutes of the meeting of 17 April 2001 were agreed.
2. Following a government reshuffle of the central civil service departments it was noted that the fire service now became the responsibility of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR).
3. It was noted that the national water safety conference had been very well received with a good representation from UKSAR. It was thought that it would be useful if UKSAR was to be included as a standard item for future conferences. The Group thought that it would be a good idea to try to include UKSAR on any agendas of national safety conferences.
4. The final report by the Helicopter Provision Working Group had been completed and approved. It was agreed that the implementation date for the recommendations would be 31 March 2002.
5. A final draft of the UKSAR Framework document had been completed. It was agreed that a full colour version would be produced and circulated.
6. The Communications Working Group had met on 15 September, the Civil Aviation Authority had accepted an invitation to become a full member of the Group. The Implementation and control documents for the UK VHF High Band Land SAR Radio Channels had been finalised and agreed. Seven applications had been approved for access to the VHF High Band Land Channels. The MCA had agreed in principal to extend the use of Channel 0 and 73 for land SAR use subject to approval by the Radiocommunications Agency. It was intended that an Implementation and Control document would be developed for the use of these Channels. BT provided the Working Group with a demonstration on the new BT Airwave Service.
7. The Working Group discussed the problems with alerting the SAR services via mobile phones.
8. The Offshore Firefighting Working Group had discussed a number of issues following the reduction in the number of brigades which were prepared to provide an offshore firefighting response. It was agreed that the issue should be raised at the Strategic Committee meeting. It was noted that there were a number of insurance issues which needed to be resolved for the fighting of fires at sea. It was noted in general that insurance issues were becoming more prevalent.
9. The Resource Tasking Working Group had looked at the problems which had been encountered when tasking SAR assets. It had concluded that there needed to be more education for the Staff in control rooms to help them identify SAR situations. It was agreed to look to finding a single point of contact for air ambulances to help facilitate the education process.

10. The next meeting of the Inland Consultative Committee would be held on 8 December, it was agreed that a copy of the finalised Framework Document would be circulated to members for information.

11. It had been agreed by the Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee that if invitees did not respond to the Group that they would be dropped from the invitation list. The members of the Committee had been advised of the new structure and minutes and Terms of Reference from the other UKSAR Groups were circulated for information. The Group had discussed their concerns with regard to the use of mobile phones to alert the SAR services particularly for maritime use. The policy was that mobile phones should not be used in the maritime environment because of the inherent dangers, however the Committee felt that the issue should be re-visited to provide clear advice. It was agreed that copies of the UKSAR Framework Document would be distributed to the members of the Group for information.

12. The arrangements for the implementation of SAR on the River Thames were on schedule, the SAR Managers and Watch Managers had been appointed. The RNLI Lifeboats had been ordered and the Station Managers appointed. A public awareness campaign would be undertaken to highlight the new arrangements.

13. The RNLI have been carrying out a pilot study into Beach Rescue which to date had proved to be very successful. The RNLI were also carrying out a pilot study with regard to inland SAR. Hovercraft trials had been completed successfully, however due to the limitations of the craft their deployment would be limited to specific locations.

14. The Group noticed the increasing concerns with regard to underwater and fast moving water rescues and suggested that there needed to be a national response on the issue.