

UK SAR OPERATORS GROUP INLAND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Saturday 21st June, 2003 at 11.00 hrs.
The venue was Headquarters, Lancashire Constabulary, Hutton, nr. Preston, Lancashire.

PRESENT

- 1 Supt. J. Darcy, Northern Constabulary, ACPO(S)
- 2 Mr. D. Stansfield, Duke of Edinburgh Award
- 3 Mr. J. Muston, Scout Association
- 4 Mr. J. Cousins, Mountain Leader Training UK
- 5 Dr. A. S. G. Jones, Secretary

1 APOLOGIES

Mr. Michael Vlasto, Maritime & Aviation Consultative Committee
Mr. Sam Crymble, Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority
Mr. Tom Redfern, Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres
Dr. Bob Mehew, National Caving Association

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14th DECEMBER, 2002

The minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 14th December, 2002 had been circulated.
They were taken as read and were accepted as a true record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Secretary reported on a e-mail received from Nick Owen (19/12/02) which summarised the involvement of the Air Ambulance, Helimed 08, in six incidents in the Lake District. It appeared that the fundamental problem was lack of adequate communications, particularly with regard to the ground SAR teams.

There was a short discussion on various aspects and problems encountered with the initial 999 call.

4 CORRESPONDENCE

The Secretary had been notified of the death of ANNE WELCH, one of the longest serving members on the Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee. On behalf of this Committee he wrote a letter of condolence to the family of ANNE WELCH. He was not able to attend the memorial service which was held on 7th March, 2003.

5 REPORT FROM THE UK SAR OPERATORS GROUP

A) Meeting of 8th January, 2003

The papers from the meeting held on 8th January, 2003 had been circulated. Members' attention was drawn to the following points:-

- i) Work had started on the development of a UK SAR Web Site.
- ii) There had been discussion on the impact of Wind Farms (off shore) on navigation and SAR. The paper had been circulated to Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee.
- iii) Five duplex High Band Channels (10 frequencies) in the International Maritime Band have been made available for use by Land SAR. They have not yet been released for use.
- iv) Resource Tasking Working Group. Problems had been encountered in Scotland with some calls going direct to the Scottish Ambulance Service who had not passed on the information to the Police.

- v) A Satellite Working Group has been established to look at all aspects of the use of satellites in emergency situations including the use of various emergency beacons. The meeting was informed that Satellite support for 121.5 MHz was due to be withdrawn in the not too distant future. There was a possibility that the use of 406 MHz beacons on land would be permitted in due course.
- vi) The Home Office publication "Dealing with Disaster" was being revised. The Operators Group had been consulted and asked for comments. It was likely that the current revision would be an interim one as much would depend on the Civil Contingencies Bill. The Secretary informed the meeting that the Draft Civil Contingencies Bill had been published.
- viii) Problems with routing of 999 calls from mobile telephones continued to be a low frequency problem.

B) Meeting of 23rd April, 2003

The papers from the meeting held on 23rd April, 2003 had been circulated. Members' attention was drawn to the following points:-

- i) The Communications Working Group were in the process of developing the administrative details that had to be completed before the five High Band Channels could be released for general use by Land SAR teams.
- ii) Work was progressing on the development of Offshore Fire fighting Teams around the coasts of the UK
- iii) Consideration was being given to the eventual establishment of a Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre in order to harmonise the command and control of a harmonised SAR helicopter force.
- iv) Concern had been expressed about the almost total lack of representation from the Ambulance Service at meeting of UK SAR Operators Group
- v) A presentation had been given on aspects of Health and Safety. A copy of the presentation had been circulated with the papers for this meeting. The Draft GRA for Land Search and Rescue had been re-circulated to members. A suggestion had been forwarded to the Secretary that, in Part B, 3.3, Uneven and/or steep ground, the words boggy ground and other water obstacles should be added. It is likely that discussion on the potential impact of Health and Safety on search and rescue will continue.
- vi) The UK SAR Web Site. The Webmaster attended the last meeting of the Operators Group. The domain name will be

www.uk-sar.org

There was a need to establish a server (host) for the web site. The Webmaster is working with the DfT to this end. It was hoped that the Web Site would be available in the not too distant future. Any comments and/or suggestions for items to be included in the Web Site should be sent to the Secretary.

- vii) The RNLI have established a Hovercraft at Morecambe
- viii) The next meeting of the Operators Group is due to be held on Thursday 9th October, 2003 in London.

During discussions of the reports of meetings of the Operators Group the following points were raised:-

a) Memorandum of Understanding

The meeting was informed that a Memorandum of Understanding between ACPO(S) and the Scottish Ambulance Service was in the process of development. The MoU concerned the handling of emergency calls from remote or hazardous areas. Further discussion was required before the MoU could be finalised and signed off. It was hoped that, once agreed, the MoU would be circulated via the UK SAR Operators Group.

b) Emergency 999 calls

The point was made that members organisations such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, Mountain leader Training UK and the Scout Association could publicise the correct and most effective procedure for making emergency calls on mobile telephones.

Concern was expressed about potential problems which could arise if and when call centres were moved overseas.

The meeting was reminded that knowledge of which particular police force area groups were in was not generally known to hill users. It, certainly, was not known to call centre operators.

There was a short discussion on education and the development of a small laminated card to be issued with every new mobile telephone sold. How this could be progressed was somewhat uncertain.

It was agreed that a concise self standing statement which could be circulated should be included in these minutes

On mountains, hills or fells, in the event of need for emergency assistance:-

- i) *Dial 999 or 112.*
- ii) *If known, ask for the Police Force in whose area you are. Otherwise ask for POLICE.*
- iii) *Once in contact with the Police ask for MOUNTAIN RESCUE.*
- iv) *Give them your location and the nature of the emergency.*
- v) *Give them your telephone number.*
- vi) *Remember that text messages may get through where voice messages can not.*

It was accepted that direct contact with the local police, if known, was acceptable.

c) Use of Annual Incident Reports

The view was expressed that Annual Incident Reports contained useful information that could be used for publishing safety and accident prevention.

It was suggested that, with regard to the Annual Incident report of the MRC, it would be useful to distinguish between purely recreational parties and groups under organised leadership. It was agreed that the suggestion should be forwarded to the Statistics Officer of the MRC.

d) Health and Safety

The presentation circulated with the papers for this meeting was noted. The meeting welcomed the continuing dialogue as indicated in the minutes of the Operators Group meeting.

Particular concern was expressed about the draft Working at Heights Directive. It was pointed out that with regard to mountaineering, what was being taught and safely taught was a sport but a sport with inherent risks. What was appropriate for the construction industry was totally inappropriate for the sport of mountaineering. During three rounds of consultations strong representations had been made to the H & S Executive but it seemed that the representations had been totally ignored. It was essential that the points be strongly re-iterated in the forth and final round of consultations.

There was a short discussion on some technical aspects such as the use of one or two ropes, and single rope technique in caving.

The view was expressed that the Draft Working at Heights Directive might have a very deleterious impact of search and rescue.

It was agreed that the problems encountered and the concerns expressed should be taken forward to the next meeting of the Operators Group.

6 **MATTERS FROM MARITIME AND AVIATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

The last meeting of the Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee was held on Friday 13th June, 2003. Points arising from that meeting are:-

- A) Concern had been expressed by some members about the difficulties being experienced by voluntary organisation with H & S Risk assessments. It was mentioned that there is a generic Inland Rescue Risk Assessment which they were going to consider. It might be possible to develop a generic risk assessment for SAR in general.
- B) The Committee was informed about the new High Band Channels being made available to Land SAR.
- C) UK Helicopter Harmonisation Project. A quote "There is a long way to go..." A brief was given detailing the current situation. Work with Industry was continuing with regard to specifications for a replacement SAR helicopter. Early indications were that there could be a reduction in the number of SAR bases as the new helicopter would be faster, covering greater areas than at present.
The Portland Helicopter Base will be retained at present following a Ministerial decision.
- D) INREM Database. The National Water Safety Committee met on 16/06/03 to progress this aspect of work. Ged Feeney, MRC Statistics Officer, is involved in this project.
- E) UK SAR - Non appearance of Ambulance Service. This was highlighted and discussion took place about the importance of Ambulance Service attending.
- F) Wind farms. Discussion took place about the siting of off-shore farms and implications for marine safety and SAR. The MCA were developing draft procedures for incidents at wind farms.
- G) The papers from the Maritime and Aviation Consultative Committee would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- A) There was a short discussion on insurance for volunteer members of SAR Teams acting in their professional capacity, e.g. Paramedics.
- B) Mention was made of the sound economic benefits derived from the availability of effective volunteer SAR Teams.
- C) The meeting was made aware of a review of funding for mountain rescue being undertaken by the Northern Constabulary. Once completed and if appropriate the report would be circulated to the Operators Group.

8 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee should be held on a weekday in the period Monday 15th to Friday 19th December, 2003 at 11.00 hrs. The Chairman and Secretary would approach Chief Supt Paul Forrester with a request to hold the next meeting at the Headquarters, Merseyside Police, Liverpool.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on **WEDNESDAY 17th DECEMBER, 2003** at 10.30hrs. for 11.00 hrs. The venue will be:-

**The Stoddart Suite
Merseyside Police HQ
Canning Place,
Liverpool. L69 1JD**

A light lunch will be provided.

Any items for the agenda of the next meeting should be sent to the Secretary by 14 November, 2003

Marine Science Labs.,
Menai Bridge,
Anglesey. LL59 5EY

Dr. A. S. G. Jones, MBE,
Secretary.