



MIRG team taking part in Exercise "Britannica"

Exercise "Britannica"

On the 26th November 2007, the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service MIRG team staged a major "at sea" exercise. The exercise took place on board a Stena Line ferry, the Stena Britannica which was en route from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and formed part of the bi-annual MCA audit of the Suffolk team.

The Stena Britannica had a 30m mid-body section inserted during a two month visit to Bremerhaven in 2007 and is now one of the world's largest Ro-Ro/passenger vessels. This was the third "at sea" exercise that the Suffolk FRS MIRG team had taken part in in 2007; all proved to be very successful. Through these exercises, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service has built up a very good rapport with both Stena Line Ferries and Trinity House and this successful ongoing engagement is instrumental in providing a very high standard of training for the Suffolk MIRG team in realistic conditions at sea.



The MV "Stena Britannica"



New Training Officer

On the 7th January 2008, the MCA appointed a new UK MIRG Training Officer. David Cass-Williams, (a serving Fire Officer in Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service), fought off tough competition for the post which attracted 19 applicants from Fire Services across the UK.

David has just completed a 3 year secondment as the Manager of the Specialist Transport Section at the Fire Service College, running firefighting and command courses for the UK's Fire Service and the Merchant Navy. David has been a fire officer for 20 years and prior to joining the Fire Service, he served for 8 years as a marine engineer in the Royal Navy and was involved throughout the Falklands Campaign in 1982. He will take up the MIRG Training Officer's role, replacing the current Training Officer, Nigel Bruty, on the 1st April 2008.



MIRG Transit Lines

HumberSide FRS MIRG has recently carried out an evaluation on a set of "Transit Lines" for use by teams working on board a vessel (at sea or in port). Transit Lines are a means of identifying the route from the Boarding Control to three main areas on the ship: 1) The Bridge; 2) The Scene of Operations and 3) The Embarkation/Disembarkation area. The use of different coloured lines and engraved tallies will make the firefighters' task of finding their way around a ship a lot easier.

Each line is 300m in length and is packed into a small bag from which it can easily be paid out. At each end of the transit line is a snap hook to which a colour coded tally, (to match the colour of the corresponding line), is secured.

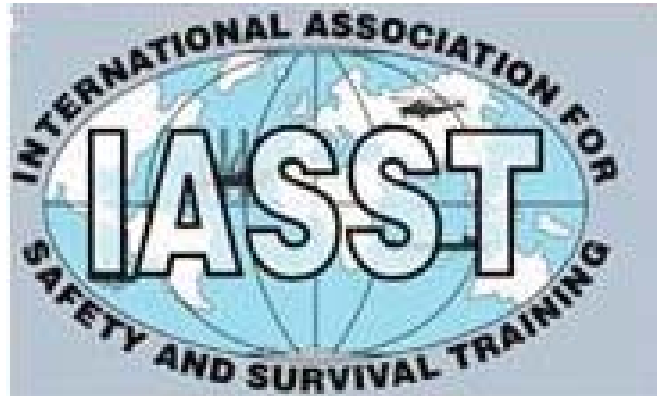
Further evaluation work is to be carried on Transit Lines by MIRG/MCA and MIRG FRS.



International Association for Safety and Survival Training (IASST)

<http://www.iasst.com/>

All MIRG team members are required to hold a certificate for Sea Survival and Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET), completed at one of the 6 MCA approved IASST providers. To ensure commonality of training standards, each training centre is audited annually by the MCA/MIRG.



The audits have been completed for 2007/8 and the outcomes have been reported back to the relevant IASST centre. These results are now being analysed by the MCA/MIRG and the course syllabus/content for the MIRG/1 training unit will be reviewed as appropriate to ensure that all MIRG team members receive the best possible training available in order to ensure that it remains relevant to the operations of MIRG Fire & Rescue Services.

MIRG Fire & Rescue Service Audits

Each of the 15 MIRG FRS teams is now audited by the MCA/MIRG on a bi-annual basis. Under this process, the first teams (Suffolk Humberside and Strathclyde) have recently been audited and it has been pleasing to see that in most cases improvements are ongoing in terms of training, promulgation of information, equipment and facilities. During the audit, each FRS MIRG team is required to carry out a "live" exercise involving a minimum of one Strike Team. Suffolk, Humberside and Strathclyde staged full exercises in conjunction with other agencies including HM Coastguard and SAR assets as well as shipping companies who have provided ships at sea to act as the "casualty".



CFOA Marine Operations Group

Following last years successful conclusion of the Sea of Change project and the delivery of the Maritime Incident Response Group, the Lead Officer for the CFOA Marine Operations Group (MOG), DCFO Mazen Khuri called a meeting to discuss the way ahead for the MOG.

The meeting, held on 29th October 2007, was attended by Officers from the 20 of the 39 UK coastal Fire & rescue Services. Presentations on the statutory duties of all coastal FRS were delivered at the meeting. The group also discussed the role of the MIRG and the relationship between MIRG and MOG, in particular, the need to develop a formal handover process to be used when a casualty vessel arrives in port.



As stated above, the majority of the original Terms of Reference of the MOG have been met , however, there are three areas that remain outstanding:

1. The development of strategy and tactics for ship firefighting, industrial rescue and HAZMAT incidents on vessels at sea and alongside
2. The development of equipment and training for coastal FRS
3. Interagency operations in harbours

The MCA MIRG will work with the CFOA MOG in setting up Working Groups to address these areas and to develop a standardised handover protocol between MIRG teams and non MIRG coastal FRSs.

STOP PRESS!! STOP PRESS!! STOP PRESS!!

Lothian & Borders MIRG Team Goes Live!

Lothian & Borders Fire & Rescue Service (L&BFRS) announced on the 10th January 2008 that their MIRG team was formally declaring its availability to attend incidents at sea on behalf of the MCA. L&BFRS is the 15th and final team to declare in accordance with the strategy originally set out by the "Sea of Change Project".



For further information on the Maritime Incident Response Group please visit our website - www.mirg.org.uk