

MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG) MEETING

The 6th MIRG meeting took place on the 19th and 20th April 2005 at Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Headquarters. Representatives from the 'declared' 15 FRS, MCA, Fire Service College and Ministry of Defence (RAF) attended.

The meeting concentrated on developing and agreeing the way forward in relation to training and the response to hazardous materials incidents at sea.

Minutes of the meeting, will be placed on the members area of our MCA web pages.

NATIONAL STRATEGY - MODEL AGREEMENT

The final draft is complete following submissions fed back to the project team from a number of Fire Authorities. These comments have been reviewed where relevant and included within the document. This has now been submitted to CFOA for onward distribution to the CFO/Chief Firemasters who are involved in the future strategy.

TASKING BY MCA

The current risk assessment 'Tasking Form' held by Coastguard stations since 1998 has now been reviewed and will become an electronic template on the Coastguard operational command system.

The original 'Form' has been divided into three key elements- 'Fire and Explosion'; 'Chemical Incidents' and 'Industrial Accidents' and each will be able to provide the local Authority with more detailed information in relation to the incident.

This information can be emailed and/or faxed to the relevant FRS Control Room and/or the casualty vessel if so appropriate.

EQUIPMENT

Tenders have now been received in the MCA for Thermal Undergarments (Layer 1); Lightweight Working Coverall (Layer 2); Foul Weather Clothing (Layer 4) and Personal Locator Beacons (PLB).

This equipment will now be evaluated prior to the awarding of contracts for purchase.

Issue of these items should begin within the next three months. Currently issue has commenced on the following items:

Emergency Breathing System (P-STASS) - for which members of the project team have been trained to deliver the local servicing requirements that will be then cascaded to all MIRG teams;

Transit Suits - 137 are currently on order and will be despatched to those MIRG teams who have previously been identified as having priority for replacement.

275N dual purpose lifejackets - 100 awaiting delivery.



Any equipment currently being developed for MIRG can be made available to other coastal FRS's.

ANGLO - FRENCH CO OPERATION

A number of exercises involving the MCA including MANCHEX 2005 are currently in the advanced planning stages. MANCHEX is held in the English Channel and this year is managed by our French colleagues. This gives us an opportunity to develop bi-national working partnerships.

SUPPORT VESSELS

The use of vessels for the transportation of firefighters raises various Health & Safety issues with regard to:

- Craft suitability, ie., type and design
- Training
- Standard operational procedures
- Emergency procedures and drills
- Personal protective equipment

Therefore it is vital that a minimum standard of operational capability and the provision for training should be identified and adopted, with the use of all other types of vessels identified as not meeting the standard being totally prohibited.

Training frequency levels for each element of activity have been identified in order to maintain the competency of personnel. Standard assessment criteria for training frequency levels must be adopted and then used to determine the frequency required for each part of the training.

Research and advice was sought from specialist sources to gain expert judgemental evaluation and a well balanced over-all view of these specialised activities.

The first draft of the working document has now been completed.

TRAINING

HELICOPTER TRAINING - following on from the previous newsletter we have now distributed to all SAR helicopter operators and flight commanders/chief pilots the training protocols in relation to sea survival and helicopter training.

TRAINING PRESENTATIONS - MIRG lead officers have now been issued with three training packages (CD Rom):

Command and Control

Nominal Roll procedures (PowerPoint).

Safety during Helicopter Transportation

An interactive 'Authorware' package produced in c operation with the Civil Resilience Directorate at the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh.

Transportation Protective Equipment (TPE)

Guidance on the use of Layers 1 - 4, lifejackets and EBS (PowerPoint/Video). The supporting risk assessments and Safe Systems of Work documents are included on the CD Rom.

To be issued shortly will be a comprehensive training package on Ship Stability.

Research into further developing the multimedia interactive packages continues.

SEA SURVIVAL - The sea survival training has now been presented to the International Association for Safety and Survival Training (IASST).

A pilot course will be run at the Humberside Offshore Training Association centre (HOTA), in May and made available to MIRG teams soon after the final agreements are secured.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (HAZMATS)

The current development of our hazmat protocols has now been presented to a range of forums/agencies and further work continues.

The principals of the 'four category' approach in relation to response protocols have now been accepted by the Project Board and MIRG lead officers. These principals have been further developed into our future 'tasking protocol' (see previous information under Tasking).



Workshops were run during the recent MIRG meeting, similar to those initially run at the CFOA Marine Operations Group meeting held in Warwick in September 2004.

A small sub group will now meet to discuss and review the contents of the current draft SOP. This includes members of the MIRG, Fire Service College and MCA Hazardous Noxious Substances (HNS) team who will report back to the next MIRG meeting due to be held on the 18th and 19th July in Staffordshire.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT PLEASE SEE THE MCA WEBPAGES