

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE MCA AND MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

We are pleased to announce that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the MCA have now finalised the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the provision of dedicated helicopter training to FRS teams that make up MIRG.

The MoU clearly defines the role taken by all parties in ensuring that a more coordinated approach is taken in the future regarding the allocation of helicopter training hours to those FRS that form the UK FRS MIRG.



A MIRG SAR Handbook that identifies key inter agency training initiatives and operating principals is currently nearing completion.

This will be issued to SAR operators by the end of September 2005 and will promote the development of a more coordinated approach to FRS SAR helicopter operation.

NATIONAL STRATEGY - MODEL AGREEMENT

The most recent draft of a proposed MIRG agreement between the 15 FRS who make up the national group was circulated to the relevant Chief Fire Officers earlier this month. This work has been progressed by ACFO Bill Welsh of Kent FRS on behalf of CFOA and the MCA. The intention is to have this agreement signed by all parties and in place by 31st March 2006.

A further agreement is being developed that will need to be supported by ALL coastal FRS's, thus ensuring all stakeholders are fully integrated into the future FRS strategy on UK maritime resilience.

EQUIPMENT

It is now just over two years since the Project Team commenced the production of formal specifications and tenders for specific 'at sea' equipment identified, in consultation with members of the CFOA Marine Operations Group, including MIRG lead officers.

All equipment, predominantly for the transportation arrangements, has now gone through the tender process. Financed by the MCA, the equipment is gradually being distributed to MIRG FRS.

The most recent tenders to be agreed are for Layer 1 and Layer 2 clothing (contract has gone to 'Fourth Element Thermodynamic Systems', Cornwall); PPE Transit Bags (contract to Ruth Lee Fire & Rescue Equipment, Denbighshire); and Lifejacket Actuator Wallets (contract to Orbison Products Ltd, Kent).

The satellite communications equipment developed by the Project Team in conjunction with ODPM should be delivered to the MCA in September. The provision of these 58 units will, after a period of assessment and training development, enhance the command and control procedures for the MIRG teams.

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

TRAINING ~ SEA SURVIVAL COURSE

The first of the new MIRG Sea Survival courses took place at the Humberside Offshore Training Association (HOTA) in early August.

Twelve members from Humberside FRS attended the two day bespoke course during which both students and trainers were extremely pleased with the level and quality of input and performance achieved.

A further programme of courses is now being scheduled for various MIRG teams including Strathclyde, North Wales and Mid & West Wales.

TRAINING - GENERAL

With a cadre of approximately 50 personnel in each location, work on standardising maritime training packages is being developed for the first time, along

with a manual covering such issues as sea survival and helicopter operations.

Much of this work is being carried out in partnership with helicopter operators and tug company representatives to ensure all safe systems being developed meet the needs of all involved parties.

The role and capability of SAR aircraft, which is the 'prime mover' for MIRG teams, is currently being reviewed via the national Helicopter Harmonisation Project (due to complete in 2012). Helicopters are expensive to run and, as previously indicated, the project has now ensured suitable training will be carried out with all three of the carriers (MCA, RAF and RN) who make up the SAR fleet.

They should be able to continue to meet our needs in respect of operational capability, subject to any strategic changes that are recommended in the Helicopter Harmonisation project.

A number of training presentations have now been produced and issued to the MIRG lead officers.

These include:

- Command & Control 1 - Nominal Role Procedures.
- Safety in Helicopter Transportation (Authorware).
- Transportation Protective Equipment.
- Ship Stability.

Further presentations are being produced and the development of an Internet based system is on the horizon.

Our two training officers have recently attended two multi media training courses to allow the Project Team to assess the way forward with regards the future development of our training delivery.

A partnership with Hampshire FRS has commenced that will investigate the potential for web based learning.

NOTE: The training 'tool box' is being developed to assist all coastal FRS.

MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG) MEETING

The 7th MIRG meeting took place on the 18th and 19th July 2005 at Staffordshire FRS Headquarters. Representatives from the 'declared' FRS's, MCA and Fire Service College attended.

The meeting included the finalising of the new Standard Operational Procedure OPS/3 ~ Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents at Sea. This has now been circulated to all coastal FRS's and other interested agencies.

Reviewing MIRG training needs was also a key subject and this will be further developed at future meetings

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

TASKING

A review of tasking protocols has taken place; much of this has evolved following previous concerns relating to overall capability in primarily responding to a chemical incident on a vessel at sea - and the ultimate consequences.

A new standard Tasking Form (see also Newsletter No.11) has been developed for Coastguard officers responding to such requests from ships which will ensure that key information is secured from the vessel.

Details of the fire, chemical or industrial incident will then assist MIRG teams to offer advice, risk assess and ascertain which resources should attend along with determined equipment needs.



Initially being used as a paper based system this will be superseded by the electronic version currently being programmed for installation in each of the Coastguard mobilising centres. This should be completed by January 2006.

It is believed that this is also the first of its type internationally - a formidable tool in the coastguard and FRS tool box!

EVENT - MARITIME EMERGENCIES

A 'unique new concept event purely dedicated to the maritime emergencies industry' is to be held on Tuesday, 25th & Wednesday, 26th October 2005 at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel, Southampton.

See www.maritimeemergencies2005.com for further details.

WEBSITE

The web pages have recently been updated to include the new OPS/3 ~ Hazmat Incidents at Sea.