

## 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 in October. 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

Further guidance 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.

## TRAINING ~ Helicopter training

As reported in the last newsletter the Project Team have been working to produce guidance that will assist SAR helicopter providers in having a greater understanding of the training initiatives relating to MIRG helicopter operations.

The MIRG 'SAR Operators Handbook' was completed on the 21<sup>st</sup> October (a memorable date in the maritime calendar!) and distributed to all SAR stakeholders.

The handbook identifies the key learning outcomes required by MIRG FRS personnel and has already been received as a landmark document for inter-agency operability initiatives.



Other SAR providers such as the RNLI have also been issued with a copy of this handbook which is available on request in PDF format.

Following the creation of two bespoke helicopter training courses, several MIRG teams have now carried out Familiarisation (MIRG/2) and Continuation (MIRG/3) helicopter training involving HMCG Portland (in support of Guernsey), HMCG Lee-on-Solent (in support of Hampshire and East Sussex), RAF Chivenor (in support of North Wales), RAF Leconfield (in support of Humberside), RAF Valley (in

support of North Wales) and HMS Gannet (in support of Strathclyde).

The feed back has been excellent and the courses have been well received by all participants. More MIRG teams will be expanding on this initiative over the next few months.

## TRAINING ~ Training Elements

The MIRG training document entitled 'Provision of Marine Training for Coastal Fire & Rescue Services' has recently been circulated to all coastal FRS and has been designed to give details of specific training required for those FRS who respond to incidents 'at sea' on behalf of the MCA. The document does require further work but in its current format should provide acceptable guidance in a number of key areas.

Much of the training is also synonymous with that required by all UK coastal FRS, ship construction for example. It is therefore recommended as best practice in ensuring that those FRS personnel who are exposed to any coastal/maritime risk meet the relevant competencies shown within this document, that has been developed in accordance with the principals of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS).

The document should not be read in isolation and is not designed to be the definitive guidance when planning maritime training events. Account needs to be taken of the supporting safe systems of work; the Fire Service Manuals and the Fire Service Guide to Health and Safety.

The two Project Team training officers are continuing to produce "PowerPoint" training presentations, in line with the document previously mentioned and, as reported in the August newsletter, a number of completed packages including most recently, Ship Construction, have been issued on CD-Rom to the MIRG lead officers.

Work is continuing in partnership with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to place all the MIRG training "PowerPoint" presentations on their web site, giving anyone with access to the internet, the opportunity to interrogate this information.

In July, the MCA purchased a multi-media and e-learning software suite called "Breeze Solutions" and "Captivate" from the US company 'Macromedia'.

The MCA Training Centre at Highcliffe, will be using this software to develop the training required for the AIS ship recognition system.

Following research into various options of enhancing our training delivery, and in light of the MCA's initiative in purchasing the multi media "Breeze" the Sea of Change project team are also now using this software to further enhance training presentations.

'Breeze' gives the option to convert existing PowerPoint presentations into a more user friendly one to one multimedia provider. The inclusion of voice, video and supporting documents will make this a very powerful tool in the MIRG FRS tool box.

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

### **TRAINING ~ Sea survival/HUET training**

A number of sea survival/helicopter underwater escape training (HUET) courses have now been successfully run by MCA accredited training providers including: HOTA - Humberside, NUTEC - Aberdeen Warsash - Southampton and Fleetwood - Lancashire.

Feedback from courses has been very favourable, in particular the HUET and application of the P-STASS.

The Project Manager and the Technical Officer have also been attending the courses to validate the content and methodology.

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### **EQUIPMENT**

Another major milestone of the Project was completed earlier this month when the final equipment tender was signed off by the MCA.

Since mid 2003 the Project Team have researched, developed, tendered and accepted contracts for 18 specialist items of equipment along with one major equipment maintenance contract.

The MCA have funded this provision for MIRG teams, full details of this can be obtained from the Project Manager and is an issue we are more than pleased to share.

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

### **MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG) MEETING**

The 8<sup>th</sup> MIRG meeting took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2005 at Staffordshire FRS Headquarters. Representatives from the MIRG FRS's, MCA and Fire Service College attended.

Reviewing MIRG training needs was 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.

### **SEABORNE TRANSPORTATION AND SHIP-TO-SHIP TRANSFER**

The transfer of personnel from one vessel to another at sea or even in estuarial waters has always presented issues regarding safety. This is an issue that affects ALL coastal FRS, due to the need to train FRS personnel to meet any statutory requirements which may include local waters.

There are times and circumstances when transfer via a ship's pilot ladder is the only option available for access and egress. This procedure will also have to be adopted as one option available in the safety exit strategy for personnel on board a casualty vessel.

It has therefore been important following the initial risk assessment to identify and develop a safe system of work that will provide the best protection when personnel are required to undertake this activity.

Development of existing practices within Humberside, Kent and North Wales FRS's identified that the additional control measure of a fall restraint system should be adopted if it could be simple and practicable in operation.

The difficulty has been finding the correct type of apparatus to provide simple freedom of movement by the wearer at all times, but ensuring fall arrest without complete 'locking out' of the device. Such a device has now been identified which should fulfil all of the required criteria including conforming to the Work at Height Regulations.

Further evaluation work is being carried out with Humberside & North Wales before publication of the Safe System of Work. The completed document should provide all coastal FRS with a national safe standard of ship-to-ship transfer.

### **CFOA MARINE OPERATIONS GROUP**

The next meeting of MOG (representing all UK coastal FRS) will take place in Portsmouth on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> March 2006. This will be a high profile event and will include the official launch of the MIRG strategy on behalf of the MCA.