

NATIONAL STRATEGY - MODEL AGREEMENT

The most recent draft of the proposed MIRG agreement between the 15 FRS's 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 (Kent FRS) on behalf of CFOA and the MCA. The intention is to have the agreement signed by all parties and in place by 31st March 2006.

A consultation document issued by CFOA (CFOA Circular 2005/1095) in November 2005 is being developed and 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.

It is anticipated that following this consultation a Fire Service Circular will be issued that defines the arrangements for all coastal FRS's in relation to incidents at sea.

EQUIPMENT

Following intensive use of lifejackets on sea survival courses in recent months, two improvements have now been developed and introduced to further enhance use and performance.

The yellow manual indicator tabs have now been located by means of Velcro onto the front bottoms of the outer cover. This not only improves the visual display to inform personnel in which mode the jacket has been placed, but also prevents the wearer from mistaking them for the manual operating tabs when manually actuating the jacket.



Also the zips on each side of the outer cover have been extended in length at the bottom to allow the zip closers to be fastened further into the jacket thus preventing damage to the zips.

All jackets are now undergoing these modifications and an amended Safe System of Work has been issued.

The MCA is currently negotiating for the provision of 'Iridium' satellite phones, one for each MIRG team, that will ensure any team mobilised to an 'at sea' incident will have good communications with the shore. These phones will be issued prior to the first of April 2006

NEW SOP - FIRE LIASION OFFICER (FLO)

The recent CFOA Circular (2005/1095) specifying the proposed arrangements with coastal FRS's in dealing with incidents at sea makes reference to the role of the HM Coastguard/FRS Fire Liaison Officer (FLO).

On making enquiries to coastal FRS's it was evident that there are very limited procedures in place that would ensure a formal cohesive working relationship with the local HM Coastguard Centre should it be required. Therefore a new MIRG/MOG SOP in relation to the role of that Fire Liaison Officer has recently been issued. This guidance has been compiled and developed to assist all coastal FRS's.

The SOP will be reviewed in six months time.

TRAINING

NEW - HAMPSHIRE FRS' WEB SITE

The MCA and Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) are pleased to announce a new 'joint' initiative.

A partnership was formed in the autumn of 2005 in an effort to make more freely available training information that has been developed for UK coastal FRS's by the MCA sponsored 'Sea of Change' Project Team. A number of training presentations (currently 12 in PowerPoint format) are now available on the HFRS website.

The link is: www.hantsfire.gov.uk/mirghome

These presentations are issued on CD ROM to lead officers of the 15 UK FRS's that make up the UK FRS Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG).

Further presentations will be added to the website later during 2006.

Future training presentations are being developed in a more interactive format using Macromedia 'Breeze' and 'Captive' ICT solutions and as they are formatted from an original PowerPoint storyboard we will still be able to make the original version available on the website.

SEA SURVIVAL/HUET & HELICOPTER TRAINING

Since the introduction of our formalised approach to sea survival and helicopter training during 2005 the MCA has currently supported the funding of training for 240+ FRS MIRG personnel on the two-day sea survival and helicopter underwater escape training courses at MCA accredited training centres.

Also 350+ FRS MIRG personnel have received familiarisation training in the use of helicopters. This has been carried out with the close cooperation of all SAR helicopter providers, ie., Bristow's, RAF and RN.

TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

The development and maintenance of national 'maritime' training competencies for coastal FRS's will continue after the project closure in March.

These competencies will be developed during 2006 as Mervyn Kettle (currently Project Manager) and Peter Pearce (Project Technical Officer) will be retained by the MCA to work in close cooperation with coastal FRS and maritime training providers to further research and develop tactical firefighting initiatives. This includes command & control and fire behaviour.

This work will continue until April 2007.

In addition one trainer (Nigel Bruty of Hampshire FRS) will also be retained by the MCA until April 2007 to produce the relevant training packages as the research is completed.

MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG) MEETING

The 9th MIRG meeting took place on the 8th & 9th February 2006 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.

TRANSPORTATION BRIEFING CARDS

In discussion with MIRG lead officers it became clear during the project's progression that there was not a standard approach to 'transportation safety briefings'.

These briefings must be carried out before the deployment of MIRG resources to an incident at sea.

The Project Team the project has therefore now introduced two 'safety information cards'. These cards were issued during February 2006 with copies also being provided at the Sea Survival training centres.

The **P-STASS Emergency Action Card** has been designed to provide key information to MIRG personnel who maybe using the P-STASS for operational/training purposes. A card is contained inside each P-STASS bag.

The **Transportation Briefing Card** is a general briefing card that provides concise safety details on key aspects of transportation to incidents at sea. This card has been designed so as to fit into the clear plastic pocket on the right hand leg of the Layer 3 transit suit. (This aspect of the design was introduced after feedback from a MIRG team member.). Copies may be obtained from the Project Team.



'MIRG MANAGER'

Recently appointed to the role of MCA/Fire Liaison Manager, Craig Cook from Strathclyde FRS will now commence the development of policies and procedures required to maintain the coordinated response on behalf of the MCA and coastal FRS's.

The post, funded by CFOA, will be the primary link between MCA and FRS's who are (i) involved in firefighting and rescue at sea, and (ii) have a coastal risk, but do not respond to incidents at sea.

With responsibility for implementing organisational objectives, monitoring and evaluating progress, and taking appropriate action to improve performance, the work undertaken will also ensure that the correct level of management is in place to maintain a cost effective operation at all times.

In addition, a significant number of outstanding Project Board recommendations can be addressed; a seamless transition from project research to more fundamental national MIRG/MOG strategy.

CFOA MARINE OPERATIONS GROUP

The next meeting of MOG (representing all UK coastal FRS's) will take place at HMS Excellent, Whale Island, Portsmouth in Hampshire on the 7th/8th March 2006. Currently 125 delegates are attending and there will be an opportunity to view a demonstration of MIRG equipment involving the use of SAR helicopter 'India Juliet' from Lee on Solent.