

PROJECT STATUS

At the March meeting of the 'Sea of Change' Project Board held at the Department for Transport, London an agreement was given to extend the Project by a further one year. The Project is now due to complete by April 2006.

The current status of the Project's research will be found in the 'Project Progress' pages of the Members' Area on the MCA website which has recently been updated.

CACFOA PRACTITIONERS' FORUM

The Independent Review of the Fire Service recommended that there should be a forum to provide practitioner input into future policy development. This forum will assist in coordinating best practice in Fire & Rescue Service professional issues.

The Project Team were given the opportunity on the 18th March to present an overview of the 'Sea of Change' project to this Forum.

Chaired by the CACFOA President, Chief Fire Officer Alan Doig, members of the forum included Sir Graham Meldrum (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Service's) and senior representatives of the three main Fire Service unions including Andy Gilchrist - General Secretary of the Fire Brigades' Union.

The forum noted the importance to the success of the project in respect to the provision of 'contingent liability' for the responding firefighters. Support for this will be directed to ODPM.

In addition the forum supported the principal of the establishment of a *Fire Service/MCA Liaison Managers* position within the MCA. A determination on the funding for this post has yet to be resolved.

EXERCISE ~ SPRING 2005

The MCA run a number of 'table-top' and 'live' exercises each year. In support of these initiatives it is intended that a major live 'at sea' exercise will take place in the Spring of 2005.

The primary aim of this exercise is to test the response and resilience of a number of those Fire & Rescue Service teams that will form the UK Fire & Rescue Service Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG).

In addition, it is anticipated that key SAR objectives for both UK and Irish participants can also be exercised.

Further details will be made available later this year.

COMMUNICATIONS

The provision of satellite communication packs is nearing fruition. The tendering process has now been completed and the packages are being built.



It is anticipated that this invaluable 'toolkit' will be available to those participating MIRG teams by the end of June 2004.

(Training initiatives have yet to be developed).

LIFEJACKETS

A 275 Newton lifejacket specification has been prepared based very much on previous knowledge and experiences.

Problems have occurred in the past with regards lifejackets not complying with both CAA and MOD requirements.

We have now had discussion with both agencies in relation to the provision of suitable lifejackets and feel that the specification we will shortly be submitting for tender will meet the requirements of both key 'carriers'.

SEA SURVIVAL TRAINING

The Project Team have taken the first steps in designing a bespoke sea survival training course(s) which would be applicable to Firefighters involved in travelling on/over the open sea and hostile coastal waters.

Currently, most sea survival training courses are based on standards aimed primarily at the offshore industry and much of the contents of these courses are not appropriate to Firefighters.

It is hoped that this sea survival training work will lead to the provision of a suitably accredited course that provides improved value for money for all those who attend.

TRAINING SECONDMENTS

As from the 1st April 2004, Station Officer's John Webb (Kent) and Keith Boswell (Mid & West Wales) joined the Project as seconded officers from their host Brigades for a period of 12 months. These positions have been funded by the MCA.

John and Keith will be focussing on driving forward the initiatives surrounding the research and production of suitable marine 'at sea' training packages in line with the Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS).

Much of the ground work has already commenced prior to the 1st April as the CACFOA Marine Operations group (MOG) have a small number of willing workers, who have already produced a considerable amount of work in relation to the firefighting and rescue at sea training packages.

The obvious 'spin off' from this work is that a considerable amount of the information being produced will be applicable to marine operations both 'inshore' and 'at sea'.

CACFOA 'MOG' and 'MIRG' MEETINGS

The next meeting(s) will take place at Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Headquarters at

Stone in Staffordshire on 1st September 2004 ~ commencing at 1400 hours, concluding at lunchtime on 2nd.

The 'MOG' meeting benefits all coastal Services and part of the seminar will be aimed at improving current working practices in relation to incidents on vessels in harbour and alongside.

Further details on this and previous meetings can be found on the Internet at www.fire-uk.org.

HELICOPTER LOAD BAGS

Following recent tendering and evaluation processes the contract for the provision of 78 new helicopter load bags has gone to the company 'Ruth Lee Ltd'.

This key piece of equipment has been designed to take account of specific loads that MIRG teams need to carry offshore, and are suitable for both air and sea transport.

This equipment is being funded by the MCA



It is our intention to submit the details/specification of this piece of equipment to all UK Brigade's via CACFOA. In addition we have also provided details of a smaller load bag that could be also be used.

Several 'non maritime' Brigades become involved with air assets - and we hopefully, by circulating these details - do not need to re invent this particular wheel!

This will be the second item of equipment we now have on order.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:-

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