

### **NATIONAL STRATEGY (PROPOSED WORKING AGREEMENT)**

The 'Red Book' first draft was circulated at the end of April to MIRG members & their Chief Fire Officers, representative bodies and other 'interested parties' (via the UK Search & Rescue Operators Group).

This document originally contained a draft working agreement and some operational working practices and procedures which would eventually be accepted by the main parties involved i.e. Fire/MCA/DfT and ODPM. In light of the feedback received the document has now been amended into its second draft and the formal agreement will be circulated without the SOP material. This material will be developed by MIRG and MOG.

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

The third meeting of the MIRG took place at Warwick University Conference Centre on 1<sup>st</sup> September.

The UK Fire & Rescue Services MIRG is represented by:

Cornwall; Guernsey; Hampshire; Jersey; Kent; East Sussex; Suffolk; Lincolnshire; Humberside; Highland & Islands; Strathclyde; Lothian & Borders; North Wales and Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Services.

A number of key issues were debated including the provision of suitable PPE to support the wearing of Transit Suits when flying in helicopters over the sea; helicopter and sea survival bespoke training courses; affects of the new Fire & Rescue Services Act and subsequent Designating Orders.

The group was also advised that two new Fire Service Circulars (No's 34 & 35) have now been published. These are in relation to operational response levels in support of Integrated Risk

Management Plans (IRMP's) and the use and provision of Helicopter Load bags (HLB's).

The next meeting of the MIRG will take place at Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Services HQ on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

### **CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (CFOA) MARINE OPERATIONS GROUP (MOG) MEETING**

This half yearly meeting followed the MIRG meeting at Warwick and was attended by 52 delegates. This particular bi-annual meeting was restricted to members of the MOG who are primarily fire officers from UK coastal Fire & Rescue Services who lead on marine operations. The meeting took place over two days and included research workshops and training presentations.

Full details of the outcomes from this and previous meetings are displayed on the CFOA website which can be found at [www.fire-uk.org](http://www.fire-uk.org)



The next meeting will be held in February 2005 (venue/dates to be promulgated). This will be an open meeting similar that held at HMS Excellent, Portsmouth in January of this year.

### **EQUIPMENT**

Steady progress is being made on researching, tendering, evaluating and purchasing the following items:

Transit Suit ~ evaluation has been completed using Mid & West Wales and North Wales FRS

and the contract is about to be issued for production and purchase.

275 Newton duel operation lifejacket ~ the tender process is now complete; three items have been submitted for tender and will undergo evaluation early November with Humberside and Lincolnshire FRS's.

Emergency Breathing Systems ~ although the tender process is complete, further progress is held up in securing the correct facilities to undertake evaluations.

Satellite Communications ~ the ODPM are leading on the provision of this equipment to the MIRG and have experienced some delays, it is hoped that this will soon be rectified.

Transit Suit - thermal undergarments ~ the risk assessment has identified the need for a standard level of thermal protection to be worn under the Transit Suits. It must also provide the best level of comfort achievable for the wearer. Research continues with this and contact has been made with both the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force who have considerable experience in this field.

In addition, the Project Team is now becoming involved with the FRS National Procurement Strategy and a meeting is being held in London to discuss its impact on the Project's work.

## RISK ASSESSMENTS

A risk assessment database has been produced by the project team that reflects three primary criteria, they are:

- Training
- Equipment
- Procedures

Similar to other agency procedures the risk analysis and assessments are researched in relation to each of the sub-criteria e.g. helicopter winching, lifejackets, etc. These will be then directly assigned into the relevant SOP's so a complete package can be available for each item/activity as we progress them.

## PROJECT BOARD

The next meeting of the Project Board takes place on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2004 at the Department for Transport, London.

## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (HAZMATS) INCIDENTS

The Project Team have identified the need to develop initiatives for the MIRG in relation to first response at maritime 'Hazmat' incidents where there is a potential threat to life.

Hampshire FRS is leading with the development of this work that will eventually integrate into the MCA's own Hazardous & Noxious Substances (HNS) role and the National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution.

## TRAINING

Inter active training packages ~ two trainers, in cooperation with staff from ODPM, are now half way through the process of gaining photographic and video material for helicopter safety, helicopter load teams, health and safety and helicopter winching.

Visits have been made to the MCA SAR flight, Lee on Solent and the RN SAR flight at 771 Squadron, RNAS Culdrose.

Additional material will be obtained during the annual 'Manchex' Exercise being held in the English Channel on 21st September and at 22 Squadron RAF Wattisham on 28th September.



Sea survival and helicopter operations ~ three bespoke training packages have been produced that should ensure firefighters receive the correct levels of training to enable them to be more effective in the maritime role ~ in particular when being transported by rotary wing aircraft.

We currently await feed back from the MOD in relation to this training before resubmitting the details to MCA accredited training providers for comments and delivery.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT PLEASE SEE THE MCA AND CFOA WEB PAGES**