



Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) ~ 'Sea of Change' Firefighting at Sea Project ~

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The 'Sea of Change' is an MCA sponsored Firefighting at Sea Research Project, in cooperation with Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate and the Chief & Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association.

The Project's primary objective is to have in place a local authority Fire Brigade integrated response to incidents involving firefighting, chemical hazards and rescue at sea'....

Marine Safety Bill success:-

“Dr Brian Iddon, Member of Parliament for Bolton South East, has successfully steered The Marine Safety Bill through Parliament

Following three major marine disasters - of the Torrey Canyon in the Western Approaches in 1967, the Braer in The Shetlands in 1993, and the Sea Empress disaster in Milford Haven in 1996 - Britain introduced legislation that has provided the best system for dealing with marine disasters of any country in the world. After the Sea Empress disaster, Lord Donaldson produced a report which recommended, among other things, that major marine incidents should be controlled by one person independently of Government.

The post of Secretary of State's (of Transport) Representative or SOSREP was established, and Robin Middleton, the first SOSREP, was appointed in 1999. Since his appointment he has dealt with more than 260 incidents at sea. Dr Iddon has been working with the SOSREP on his Marine Safety Bill.

The SOSREP has found two powers missing in the current legislation. Firstly he cannot give directions for a ship to use private wharfs, jetties or piers without permission from the riparian owners of those facilities. Clause One of the Marine Safety Bill will, if enacted, give the SOSREP the power to use those private facilities in an emergency without seeking permission and provide compensation to their owners for any losses incurred, which will be recoverable from the ship's owners *via* their insurers in most cases.

Clause Two of The Marine Safety Bill will allow fire authorities to make a charge for fighting fires at sea outside County boundaries. Currently their legal jurisdiction lies within the terrestrial County boundaries and up to the low water mark along the coast.

Suffolk County Fire Brigade fought a fire on a ship at sea some months ago and has been unable to recover its costs, even following Court action. As a result, they have withdrawn from this duty. Only 10 coastal Fire Brigades are now available around the 10,000 miles of British shoreline to fight fires on ships at sea. The Marine Safety Bill is expected to encourage more coastal fire authorities to train personnel and acquire the equipment to enable them to fight fires at sea. In the ten years from 1991-2001 there were 347 fires on ships within the United Kingdom's 12 mile limit.

The Marine Safety Bill completed its final stage in the House of Lords on 16th July 2003. It will receive Royal Assent before it becomes an Act of Parliament

National Strategy

The Project Team met with the Project Board at the Department for Transport, London on 11th July for the 3rd meeting of the Board.

Two 'Objectives' were delivered in relation to items 2.3.3 and 2.3.5 (see Exception Report on website). These two Objectives will be placed in the Members Area of the website.

The Project Board have agreed a 'way forward' with regard the teams that it is hoped will become part of the National Strategy. The Chief Coastguard has written to Chief Fire Officers of the 39 coastal Brigades and currently has received 30 replies, all of which are supportive of the principals of the proposed strategy.

Further details in relation to identifying the specific 'group members' has yet to be completed, but it is hoped to hold a meeting at the end of September with all those concerned. Details of the outcomes will be available on the website (Members Area) as implementation progresses.

Training

Work is progressing in producing modules in line with IPDS for Command and Control, Stability, Transportation by air and sea and Marine Legislation.

The Training Working Party have met three times and the style and layout for training modules has now been agreed. Three additional Group members have been co-opted onto the Working Party making a total of eight members.

The Working Party will be holding a three day workshop in Staffordshire in September to approve a large number of modules already prepared and to continue the development and planning for the modules still to be tackled.

Equipment

The Project Team's current key objective is to identify the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for transportation by air and sea and specialist operational equipment.

Project Exception Report

This Exception report is presented to the Project Board every two months. The Project Objectives and current status can be found in the website Members Area..

Internet Information:

The 'Sea of Change' Internet website, which is supported by the MCA is now the primary tool in with regards the sharing of information and 'Newsletters' will be kept brief and direct readers to the web pages.

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