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Ref: T2/6.01

MSC.1/Circ.1183
31 May 2006

**GUIDELINES ON THE PROVISION OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT AS AN AID TO
INCIDENT CONTAINMENT FOR SAR AUTHORITIES AND OTHERS CONCERNED**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eighty-first session (10 to 19 May 2006), with a view to providing specific guidance on the provisions for providing external support as an aid to incident containment for SAR Authorities and others concerned, approved the Guidelines on the provision of external support as an aid to incident containment for SAR Authorities and others concerned, prepared by the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue at its tenth session (6 to 10 March 2006), as set out in the annex.

2 Member Governments and international organizations in consultative status are invited to bring the annexed guidance to the attention of SAR Authorities and others concerned.

ANNEX

GUIDELINES ON THE PROVISION OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT AS AN AID TO INCIDENT CONTAINMENT FOR SAR AUTHORITIES AND OTHERS CONCERNED

1 Introduction

1.1 In addition to the services that SAR Authorities provide in accordance with the SAR Convention, other emergency support can be provided or arranged in order to assist the ship to remain habitable. While there is no obligation on SAR Authorities to provide such services, they may be best-suited to assist if appropriate plans and resources to do so are developed.

2 Types of external support

2.1 The following types of externally supplied assistance and support may be available to those remaining on board:

.1 Fire-fighting personnel and equipment

Teams of shore-based fire-fighters, suitably trained and equipped for incidents at sea, may be brought to the ship in distress by helicopter and/or by surface craft, to advise and assist the ship's crew in tackling and/or containing fires, smoke, and/or chemical hazards arising from spilled, leaking or burning materials. Fire and/or salvage teams may also be able to bring additional equipment to the ship to assist in dealing with such hazards.

.2 Extrication of trapped persons

Fire and/or salvage teams may be brought to the ship with suitable equipment to rescue, or assist with the rescue of, persons trapped in machinery, etc., or by wreckage, flooding, fire, smoke or other environmental hazard, or in conditions of list restricting or preventing the use of stairs and walkways.

.3 Salvage personnel and equipment

It is axiomatic that lifesaving takes precedence over salvage – but saving the ship may also be the best means of saving her passengers and crew. Salvage teams, trained, equipped and experienced in dealing with incidents at sea can, as part of or in addition to their normal salvage work, assist with lifesaving by, for example, helping to keep a ship afloat, upright and stable.

.4 Emergency towing

Provision of a vessel capable of establishing and maintaining a tow on a disabled ship may also be a lifesaving measure if, for example, the ship is thereby kept clear of navigational hazards. Towing may also be a rescue measure if the ship can be brought to a place of safety with her people still aboard.

.5 Damage control equipment

Equipment may be brought to the ship to prevent further damage, control flooding, restore stability, and/or to enable (temporary) repairs to be undertaken, thus enabling the ship to reach a place of safety under her own power or under tow.

- .6 **Engineering support**

In cases of breakdown of main propulsion systems or other key equipment, the provision of extra engineering personnel and equipment in support of ship's staff may enable the ship to keep her people aboard until she reaches a place of safety.
- .7 **Medical assistance**

Medical teams, equipment and/or supplies may be brought to the ship to assist ship's staff with triage and initial treatment of illness or injury, stabilizing patients so that they can be kept on board until a place of safety is reached rather than being exposed to the additional risk and trauma of being taken ashore by helicopter or boat.
- .8 **Decontamination teams**

In cases where the ship is contaminated (whether by accident or by deliberate release), specialist decontamination teams and equipment may be brought to the ship to contain the damage and treat those affected. In addition to the usual aim of rescuing those directly affected, this procedure may also be necessary in order to protect other people – including the crews of SAR facilities and responding personnel at the place of safety – and equipment: the loss of a SAR unit because of contamination will have serious consequences for further SAR work, for example.
- .9 **Welfare support**

In addition to medical assistance, it may be necessary to provide other basic humanitarian services to the ship to prevent her having to be evacuated. Such services may include temporary shelter, water, food, heating, clothing and additional or replacement lifesaving equipment. Trained personnel may also be required to assist the ship's staff, particularly in the care of passengers.
- .10 **Security support**

Additional specialist support may be required according to the circumstances of the incident. Amongst such specialists are security personnel (police, military, etc.) who may be brought aboard to deal with or contain a specific security threat, or to assist in the control of passengers.
- .11 **Extra communications**

The provision of extra communications equipment and personnel to assist ship's staff will not in itself remove the need for evacuation, but should be arranged in support of other responses noted above.
- .12 **SAR liaison support**

Extra personnel and specialist equipment may be needed aboard ships engaged in responding to an incident, usually to assist with on scene co-ordination and/or with communications and logistics. Again, provision of this resource alone will not prevent evacuation, but it may be of assistance in support of other responses noted above.
- .13 **Other specialist support**

Other specialists whose support may be required are marine pilots and other staff from the coastal State, and additional or replacement ship's staff, especially if members of the original crew are incapacitated.

3 Identifying sources of external support

3.1 The SAR Co-ordinator* of each Member State should seek to identify potential sources of external support of the types listed in paragraph 2 above and should discuss with each potential source the possibility of utilizing it for rescue purposes at sea.

3.2 In seeking to identify potential sources of support, the SAR Co-ordinator should consider all emergency response resources available in the SAR Region, including salvage and counter-pollution resources, shoreside emergency services such as fire and rescue services, medical services, and security services, and the availability of seagoing tugs, and damage control and decontamination equipment.

3.3 The SAR Co-ordinator should also liaise, where practicable, with Companies** operating in the SAR Region (and particularly with passenger ship Companies) as to the support arrangements the Company has made in accordance with its responsibilities under the ISM Code.

3.4 The SAR Co-ordinator should develop and maintain a register of the specialized services available within each SAR Region which can provide external assistance and support.

4 Provision of external support

4.1 It is recommended that memoranda of understanding should be agreed by the SAR Co-ordinator and providers of external support services. Such memoranda of understanding should include details of the service available; any limitations on its use; how it will be alerted, tasked and transported to and from the scene; lines of command, control and co-ordination; communication arrangements; and any financial arrangements, including cost recovery.

4.2 The register of support services available, together with relevant contact details and details of memoranda of understanding or other agreements, should be available to the RCC.

5 Co-ordination of support arrangements with the Company

5.1 Companies and SAR services should co-ordinate their support arrangements when planning for emergency response. Relevant memoranda of understanding or other agreements should be brought to the attention of both parties.

5.2 In the event of an incident, the RCC and the Company should make early contact and establish reliable communications, so as to ensure, *inter alia*, that the support arrangements they are setting in place are co-ordinated with each other.

5.3 Which party is leading the response should also be made clear from the outset and kept under review. In general, the Company will lead in incidents that do not amount to distress, with SAR service support as necessary. In distress situations the roles will usually be reversed. In both cases, however, it will usually be for the ship's master to assess his on-board support needs, and for the Company and the SAR services to act in his support.

* "One or more persons or agencies within an Administration with overall responsibility for establishing and providing SAR services and ensuring that planning for those services is properly co-ordinated" (as defined in the IAMSAR Manual).

** As defined in the International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

5.4 Both at the planning stage and during an incident it should be agreed by both parties whether or not a resource is being used for rescue (i.e., as part of the lifesaving response in an incident amounting to distress). It is likely that other operations will be taking place in addition to SAR (counter-pollution and/or salvage operations, for example) and prioritization and co-ordination of these different parts of the overall response is important.

5.5 If costs are accrued as part of the external support function, it should be clear to both parties where those costs will fall.

6 Maritime Assistance Services (MAS)

6.1 Assembly resolution A.950(23) deals with the establishment and duties of the Maritime Assistance Service (MAS) – the point of contact between ships and the coastal State for incidents which do not amount to distress, and distinguishes between the MAS and Rescue Co-ordination Centres (RCC) in this regard.

6.2 While the MAS does not have a rescue function, and does not necessarily supply support services itself, close contact with it should be established by the SAR Co-ordinator and maintained by the RCC in order to aid communication and co-ordination. As recommended in resolution A.950(23)*, consideration should be given to having the MAS function carried out by the RCC. The RCC will then have direct knowledge of, and contact with, the services that may be available to support SAR, including external support services. An additional benefit to this arrangement is that there is then a single point of contact for the coastal State for a ship with an emergency to report.

6.3 In any event, it is important that, in incidents involving other responses in addition to SAR, the priorities are clear to all involved. The safety of life takes priority over protection of the environment and the salvaging of property. Operations should be carefully co-ordinated so as to ensure that this is the case. This includes the use of support services whose roles may include responsibilities in more than one area of operations.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The safety of those involved in an emergency remains the chief priority at all times. If a ship remains habitable following an emergency, the SAR Authorities and others concerned should seek to provide support as an aid to containing the emergency and specifically to reduce the need for evacuation.

* “The allocation of MAS functions to an MRCC could from a practical viewpoint be an advantageous and effective solution but would require the personnel to be well trained in distinguishing between circumstances causing a ship to find itself in a distress situation and circumstances placing a ship in a difficult situation but not in distress as defined in the SAR Convention and procedures arising there from” (resolution A.950(23), Annex 2, paragraph 1.2).