Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual (MERSAR)

Foreword

Contents

Introduction

This Manual was revised and replaced by the IAMSAR Manual.

Foreword

In 1969 IMO considered search and rescue matters, and as a first step prepared the Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual (MERSAR). This manual was adopted by the seventh IMO Assembly in 1971.

The purpose of this Manual is to provide guidance to those who, during emergencies at sea, may require assistance or may be able to render assistance. In particular, it was designed to help the master of any ship who might be called upon to participate in search and rescue operations.

Following the adoption of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979 and approval of the IMO Search and Rescue Manual (IMOSAR Manual) by the thirty-eighth session of the Maritime Safety Committee, the MERSAR Manual was revised to take account of the provisions of the Convention and also to align it, where appropriate, with the IMOSAR Manual. Since that time the MERSAR Manual has been amended by the Maritime Safety Committee on a number of occasions to take account of technological changes and related amendments to international conventions, resolutions and recommendations affecting SAR operations and procedures.

The present fifth edition (1993) of the manual incorporates all amendments adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee up to and including those adopted at its sixtieth session (6-10 April 1992), which became applicable on 8 April 1993.

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Introduction

0.1 Purpose

0.1.1 The purpose of this Manual is to provide guidance for those who during emergencies at sea may require assistance from others or who may be able to render such assistance themselves. In particular, it is designed to aid the master of any vessel who might be called upon to conduct search and rescue (SAR) operations at sea for persons in distress.

0.2 Categories of distress incidents

0.2.1 In general, distress incidents fall into two main categories:

.1 coastal - in which some or all of the following may be available to assist: ships, aircraft, helicopters and shore-based life-saving facilities;

.2 ocean - in which ships and long-range aircraft may be available although, in the more remote ocean areas, only ships may be available.

0.3 Obligations and responsibilities

0.3.1 The basis for this Manual is the international conventions which set out responsibilities for assistance at sea. It is accepted as the normal practice of seamen, indeed there is an obligation upon masters, that they render every assistance within their power in cases where a person or persons are in distress at sea. These obligations are set out in regulation V/10 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS 1974), which is quoted in annex 3.

0.4 Position-reporting systems

0.4.1 Position-reporting is an instrument for search and rescue. Therefore, masters are encouraged to make full use of position-reporting arrangements and facilities wherever they exist.
0.5 Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>CES</td>
<td>coast earth station</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>coast radio station</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>call sign</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSP</td>
<td>commence search point</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>co-ordinator surface search</td>
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<tr>
<td>D/F</td>
<td>direction-finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>emergency locator transmitter</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPIRB</td>
<td>emergency position-indicating radio beacon</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETA</td>
<td>expected time of arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>high frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERCO</td>
<td>&quot;International Code of Signals&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>MERSAR</td>
<td>&quot;Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>medium frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSC</td>
<td>on-scene commander</td>
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<td>RCC</td>
<td>rescue co-ordination centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSC</td>
<td>rescue sub-centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>RU</td>
<td>rescue unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>search and rescue</td>
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<tr>
<td>SITREP</td>
<td>situation report</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRR</td>
<td>search and rescue region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTC</td>
<td>Universal Time (Co-ordinated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHF</td>
<td>very high frequency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0.6 Terms and definitions

The terms listed below are taken from the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and have the following meanings:

.1 "search and rescue region". An area of defined dimensions within which search and rescue services are provided.

.2 "rescue co-ordination centre". A unit responsible for promoting efficient organization of search and rescue services and for co-ordinating the conduct of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region.

.3 "rescue sub-centre". A unit subordinate to a rescue co-ordination centre established to complement the latter within a specified area within a search and rescue region.

.4 "rescue unit". A unit composed of trained personnel and provided with equipment suitable for the expeditious conduct of search and rescue operations.

.5 "on-scene commander". The commander of a rescue unit designated to co-ordinate
search and rescue operations within a specified search area.

.6 "co-ordinator surface search". A vessel, other than a rescue unit, designated to co-ordinate surface search and rescue operations within a specified search area.

**IMO-Vega Note**

This Manual was revised and replaced by the IAMSAR Manual.

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The present fifth edition (1993) of the manual incorporates all amendments adopted by the Maritime Safety Committee up to and including those adopted at its sixtieth session (6-10 April 1992), which became applicable on 8 April 1993.

**Document Links**

- Chapter 1, Co-ordination, doc. no. MERSAR01ABA
- Chapter 2, Ship in distress, doc. no. MERSAR02ABA
- Chapter 3, Assisting ships, doc. no. MERSAR03ABA
- Chapter 4, SAR Aircraft, doc. no. MERSAR04ABA
- Chapter 5, Planning search, doc. no. MERSAR05ABA
- Chapter 6, Conclusion search, doc. no. MERSAR06ABA
- Chapter 7, Communications, doc. no. MERSAR07ABA
- Chapter 8, Aircraft casualty, doc. no. MERSAR08ABA
- Annex 1, Standard reports, doc. no. MERSARA1ABA
- Annex 2, Man over board, doc. no. MERSARA1ABA
- Annex 3, SOLAS reg. V/10, doc. no. MERSARA1ABA
- Image, doc. no. MERSAR.PNG