



TECHNICAL CIRCULAR No. 332 of 8TH April 2016

To:	All Surveyors/Auditors
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Subject:	IMO Pushes Ahead with SAR Initiatives
Reference:	IMO's sub-committee on Navigation

IMO Pushes Ahead with SAR Initiatives

The IMO's sub-committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue held its third Session (NCSR3) from Monday 29 February through Friday March 4, and the meeting saw a push forward for important changes to search and rescue operations.

Of note was the discussion of SAR cooperation plans. The concept of SAR cooperation planning stems from the 1994 Estonia disaster. The ship sank in the Baltic Sea, and 852 people died. Investigators found that a lack of mutual understanding between passenger ships and the SAR services had hindered the response. SOLAS was subsequently amended to require the exchange of information and emergency response exercises. However, some administrative difficulties have emerged.

Administrative Difficulties

The value of establishing a relationship and exchanging core information between passenger ships and SAR authorities is long agreed, but the process has always been hard to administer for ships trading through many SAR regions,

After careful discussion in the SAR Working Group at the meeting, the sub-committee has now requested the International Civil Aviation Organization / IMO Joint Working Group on SAR (which will meet in Berlin in September) to consider the matter further and develop draft amendments to the existing IMO guidance (MSC Circular 1079) that "include potential ways of improving and simplifying the system." The Joint Working Group's work will then be looked at during NCSR's next meeting in March 2017.

The idea of a full, directly accessible database (with appropriate security and 24/7 accessibility, of course) remains one preferred option

Maybe, inclusion of the SAR cooperation plan in the ship's Safety Management System is simply logical, as emergency planning is part of the ISM requirement anyhow. This should help avoid the plan being forgotten about, and getting out of date.

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Company emergency planners should have easy access to information about available SAR services too, and the new Global SAR Plan module to be placed on GISIS should help with that.
CLIA Supports Change

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) fully supports the underlying need to revise the guidelines on SAR plans for cooperation as laid out in MSC Circular 1079, in particular for passenger ships trading through many SAR regions, such as cruise ships.

CLIA agrees with the assertions made in the submission to MSC 95, including: Simplifying the process related to the dissemination of SAR plans for cooperation for ships transiting many SAR regions would provide more efficient and effective ways of having the plans readily available to the relevant SAR services in case of emergency and would reduce the costs and the administrative burden on all entities involved.

Vessel triage

During the meeting, the sub-committee stated its encouragement for Member States, SAR services and other parties to test the vessel triage method. The vessel triage method applies the principles of medical triage to shipping accidents. The method expresses the safety status of a vessel in terms of four categories: Green, Yellow, Red and Black. The safety status of a vessel is least compromised when its vessel triage category is green. Black represents the most unsafe conditions.

The vessel triage category is determined based on the assessed severity of six threat factors:

- Flooding;
- Listing, decrease of stability;
- Decrease of maneuverability;
- Black-out;
- Fire, explosion; and
- Danger posed by hazardous substances.

REFERENCES:

- **IMO Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue**

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kindest Regards,
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