IMRF calls for nominations for the IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards, 2017

The inaugural IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards raised awareness of the excellent work done by those involved in the maritime SAR community by recognising outstanding bravery and achievements and highlighting innovative new SAR products and technologies.

We are now calling for nominations and entries for the H.E.R.O. ( Honouring Excellence in Rescue Operations) Awards 2017.

An estimated 400,000 lives are lost in the world’s waters every year, a number that would be much higher without the outstanding work done by individuals and teams in the maritime search and rescue (SAR) sector.

Too often the full story is not told. There are teams of people working together to coordinate the rescues, while new technology and innovations are helping to reduce the time it takes to complete a rescue. There are individuals who are working selflessly to make sure that those in distress can be saved and there are people who have given a lifetime of service to make the world’s waters safer.

The IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards seek to recognise some of these exceptional individuals and organisations around the world that make maritime SAR possible.
Editorial

As always this edition of LIFE LINE is packed full of news from the search and rescue community and you may notice that we have changed our schedule! We will now be publishing our newsletter quarterly and our editions will be going to Press in May, August, November and February. This means you all have even more time to submit your stories to me at news@imrf.org.uk!

As Editor of LIFE LINE I follow the news quite closely and one SAR story that really held my attention, as well as that of the media, was the rescue of Matthew Bryce.

Matthew Bryce was surfing off of the coast of Scotland when he was swept out to sea. He was found clinging to his surfboard 26 kilometres from Scotland and having spent 32 hours in the Irish Sea. He was eventually spotted by a Coastguard helicopter and flown to a hospital in Northern Ireland.

The interview with him is emotional viewing and can be found here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-scotland-39805770/surfer-tells-of-worst-moment-in-32-hours-adrift

He speaks of the moment that he saw the helicopter coming back for him:

‘I thought it had missed me, then it turned round and when I saw them turn, it’s indescribable. It’s the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. I owe them my life. I can’t thank them enough.’

To most non-SAR people the ‘them’ means the helicopter crew, but I couldn’t help but think of the whole team that facilitated this rescue.

The lifeboat crews and the coastguard teams searched vast areas of land and sea whilst the operations room calculated search areas and controlled the mission so that, in the end, the helicopter crew passed over Matthew in the Irish Sea.

When the winchman finally plucked Matthew from the sea he did it on behalf of each and every individual whose excellence saved a life that day. His hand reaching down from the winch line represented a vast team whose SAR stories are not being told and that is exactly why we launched the H.E.R.O awards. We want to hear the stories of mission control, of the inventors of technology, and of all the elements that save life at sea, each and every day.

There are heroes all around us and in our Member Focus article on page 4, Virgin Islands Search and Rescue explain how a local hero, affectionately known as ‘Marmalade Man’, has kick-started their fundraising drive.

This is also the sort of innovation that will be discussed in June this year at the IMRF Fundraising Skillshare. This Skillshare will be a chance for all fundraisers and communicators to share ideas and explore how to approach fundraising for SAR so dont forget to register now!

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Dates for the Diary

PACSAR Meeting and Workshops
22-26 May 2017, Auckland, New Zealand.

6th Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference
22 & 23 May 2017, Jupiters Gold Coast, QLD, Australia.

Maritime Search & Rescue 2017
23 & 24 May 2017, Helsinki Finland

G4 International Maritime Mass Rescue Conference
11-13 June 2017, SSRS HQ, Gothenburg, Sweden.

MRO Subject Matter Expert Course
14-16 June 2017, Gothenburg, Sweden

IMRF Fundraising/Communication ‘Skill-Share’ Meeting

6th International SAR Conference (ISAR 2017)
10-12 July 2017, Hyatt Regency, Chennia, India.

ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on SAR
2-6 October 2017, Wellington, New Zealand.

IMRF European Regional Meeting 2017
2-4 November 2017

World Maritime Rescue Congress (WMRC) 2019
16-19 June 2019, Vancouver, Canada.

For details of these events, and more, please go to www.international-maritime-rescue.org/events.

If you are planning a SAR event of international interest please send the details to news@imrf.org.uk.
LIFE LINE
The IMRF at European Parliament

IMRF calls for dialogue to discuss unsubstantiated claims of misconduct.

On the 29th March ten maritime search and rescue non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the IMRF, met with representatives of the European Parliament in Brussels. The meeting which took place with the support of Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Miguel Urban, discussed the on-going humanitarian crisis on Europe’s southern borders, and the SAR NGOs’ on-going essential efforts to save life at sea.

The focus was understanding and agreeing the means and methods of addressing unsubstantiated accusations of unlawful conduct by SAR NGOs in the Mediterranean region, which, if allowed to continue unchecked, these accusations will endanger lawful SAR activities.

Our CEO, Bruce Reid said "We were disappointed that the representatives from the European security institutions did not attend the planned closed door meeting on the first day as there is an urgent need to increase dialogue between the NGOs and these organisations."

"Recent unsubstantiated media reports of SAR NGO’s misconduct, need to be addressed, not through the media, but through constructive open dialogue..."

He continued "...We do not know of any maritime SAR NGO’s who are operating outside the SAR rules and regulations and we share the security agencies concerns if this is indeed the case. We hope that with the assistance of the EU parliament we can start an effective dialogue to resolve these concerns, so that the focus can return to saving people in distress.”

During the two days of co-ordinated meetings and discussions, the attending SAR NGOs (United Rescue Aid, Sea-Watch, Proem-Aid, ProActiva Open Arms, SOS Mediterranee, Hellenic Rescue Rescue, Jugend Rettet, Humanitarian Pilots Initiative, SMHumanitario) and their representatives, alongside the independent maritime human rights charity Human Rights at Sea and the IMRF rejected all of the unsubstantiated claims or commentaries that alleged/suggested illegal direct cooperation by SAR NGOs with criminal networks.

Furthermore in order to develop and refine professional SAR NGO operations, all of the attendees and representatives agreed the objective and intent of the First Edition of the voluntary ‘Code of Conduct for Search and Rescue Operations undertaken by civil society Non-Governmental Organisations in the Mediterranean Sea’. This was agreed on the basis that the Code aligns with the three core areas for undertaking lawful SAR operations, those being; following accepted international humanitarian principles; defending fundamental human rights and the professionalisation of operational conduct.

The attendees agreed to further refine the First Edition and they united in requesting that:

(1) unsubstantiated accusations of unlawful conduct by SAR NGOs without the presentation of clear evidence cease immediately.

(2) SAR NGOs have free, fair and open dialogue going forwards with all applicable European institutions on the positive integration of civil society SAR NGOs into humanitarian rescue efforts at sea.

These aims support the attendees’ overall goal of encouraging international, governmental and nongovernmental organisations to remain focused on the humanitarian task of ensuring that all people in distress in the waters of the Mediterranean can be saved.

New NGO guidance for co-ordination of Search and Rescue in the Mediterranean published

Human Rights at Sea has published the first voluntary NGO minimum standard guidance, working towards increased levels of joint coordination and cooperation for the on-going humanitarian relief effort in the Mediterranean region and in close co-ordination with established Rescue Coordination Centres, other State and non-State actors.

The first edition of the document titled “Voluntary Code of Conduct for Search and Rescue Operations undertaken by civil society Non-Governmental Organisations in the Mediterranean Sea” is intended to act as the basis for rapid iterative development with as many stakeholders as possible, including European Institutions, Agencies, shipping and fishing associations and military forces.

Drafted in close co-ordination with numerous NGO stakeholders and project led by Melanie Glodkiewicz, it is based on established humanitarian principles, existing Search and Rescue Convention, applicable international law and SAR guidance from the IMRF.

The new publication puts down a marker and provides a starting point for a more comprehensive approach between NGOs in rescuing migrants and refugees at sea. It also seeks to provide increased transparency for understanding the actions of civil society NGOs by other actors.

The publication encourages the sharing and development of joint Standard Operating Procedures. Further, it develops the concept of agreed pre-operation on-scene coordination, to include a voluntary agreement on baseline operational principles between on-scene responders prior to enacting of formal SAR operational co-ordination under well-established SAR and maritime Conventions.

David Hammond, CEO Human Rights at Sea, commented that “With the unprecedented mass movement of people towards Europe, co-ordination at every level is critical to acting effectively and also protecting fundamental rights using a comprehensive approach to tackle this generational issue. This new voluntary guidance is aimed at getting people around the table, stopping unhelpful distractions by attacks towards civil society NGOs and promoting effective co-operation between all State and non-State actors.”

See the full guidance here: https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20170302-NGO-Code-of-Conduct-FINAL-SECURED.pdf or email Melanie Glodkiewicz melanie@humanrightsatsea.org

www.international-maritime-rescue.org
Member Focus- Virgin Islands Search and Rescue

Virgin Islands Search and Rescue (VISAR) is a non-profit organisation (NPO) made up of 45 fully trained volunteer crew members. In 2016 alone these volunteers gave up over 2,200 hours of their personal time to saving lives at sea. Here VISAR Trainee, Kate Mullan, explains more about the organisation and about how a jar of Orange Marmalade has kick started a fundraising drive.

VISAR is located in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) which is made up of four main islands, with a total land area of 59 square miles and a population of circa 33,000 people. This small Caribbean Island chain is known for near perfect year round sailing conditions and pristine beaches and this has led the cruise ship industry to make Tortola a weekly stop on their itineraries.

In 2016, tourism brought in over 406,000* visitors to the territory with an additional 699,105* cruise ship guests. With the increase in tourism, VISAR has found the demand for medical assistance has dramatically increased since the organization’s inception nearly 30 years ago. *http://www.caribjournal.com/2017/02/26/bvi-tourism-performing/

VISAR was founded in 1988, after a team of development advisers from the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office was sent to the BVI to make recommendations to the Government of the Virgin Islands. One of their recommendations was that the Government should invite the informal SAR service to create an “autonomous, para-professional, dedicated volunteer maritime search and rescue service.” So, at the request of the Government, VISAR became an official NPO and was modelled on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in the UK. Much like the RNLI, and many other lifeboat services in Europe, it is an independent, volunteer-based organisation funded almost entirely by charitable donations.

The majority of the $225,000 operating budget is raised through personal donations, memberships and a variety of fundraising programs and on Saturday 18 February, VISAR honoured its largest personal donor, by renaming the Tortola Base in memory of Mrs. Elisabeth Ann Harris.

Mr. Gerard Kraakman, president of VISAR, welcomed Mr. Roger Harris and his daughter Susan Roller, who generously gave a substantial donation to VISAR in Elisabeth’s honour. The Harris family have been strong supporters and true friends of VISAR since it formed in 1988, giving in any way they could, large or small. Roger is affectionately known as ‘the marmalade man’ and he shared with attendees the story of how Elisabeth started making marmalade to sell for charity and donating most of the proceeds to VISAR.

Roger spoke on his wife’s passion for sailing and adventure: She started at the age of 12 with her father in their dinghy at Hayling Island in the south of England and went on to Bermuda as a nurse (where Roger met her) and then onwards to Fiji, Saudi Arabia and the BVI. Many boats were sailed along the way, ending up with their treasured Catalina “Cool Change” in Tortola, which they happily sailed for 16 years until Ann’s death.

Roger rounded off his speech by strongly encouraging banks, trust companies, charter boat operators, marina owners and ships, and even government, to realise the important role played by this totally voluntary and unfinanced organisation, and be more generous in contributions to keep them afloat!

Roger’s generous donation will kick-start VISAR’s fundraising drive for replacement rescue vessels for the BVI, which is VISAR’s main focus in 2017, aiming to have them on island in 2018. VISAR will also be launching a safety at sea campaign working with the charter boat industry to raise awareness of some of the common accidents and emergencies they are called to in the BVI waters, and how to minimize risks.

Gerard expressed that, “along with our volunteer crew, our vessels are the number one tool for saving lives at sea”. In 2016 the boats launched 82 times and VISAR is there for all those that work, play or live on the water, providing access to world class marine emergency services.

A Jar of marmalade might not seem like much but the profits from just 3 of those jars pays for one volunteer to have emergency first responder training and 8 jars pay for a lifesaving EpiPen for major allergic reactions.

“After her death I carried on with the labour of love”

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“After her death I carried on with the labour of love”
IMRF calls for nominations for the IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards, 2017

Continued from front page

The IMRF H.E.R.O. awards shine a light on the outstanding work done by the paid and unpaid professionals globally who work selflessly to keep our waters safer. We want more people to understand the complexity of maritime SAR and to see the people who are working to ensure people in distress can be saved.

Our CEO, Bruce Reid, elaborates: “We had some exceptional nominations last year and we know that there are people all around the world doing incredible things, making a real difference and they deserve to be recognised and applauded for the fantastic contribution they make and the people they are saving”.

There are four categories in the IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards 2017:

**Individual award** recognising outstanding contribution by an individual in a maritime SAR operation

**Team award**, recognising outstanding contribution by a team or teams in the maritime SAR ecosystem working together to save lives, sponsored by McMurdo.

**Innovation and Technology award** recognising new products and technologies developed that improve the work and success of SAR organisations.

**The Vladimir Maksimov Lifetime Achievement award** recognising outstanding service to SAR by an individual or organisation, sponsored by Inmarsat.

Nominations can be made online at [www.imrhero.org/nomination-form](http://www.imrhero.org/nomination-form) alternatively email hero@imrf.org.uk or call +44 (0)1569 767405 for an application form.

The closing date is 28 July, 2017. All of the submissions will then be assessed by the judges and the winners announced at an awards dinner held at the RNLI, Poole in the UK and online, 2 November, 2017.

The H.E.R.O. Awards 2017 recognise actions that took place, or were completed, in the period from 01 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. Any individual or organisation anywhere in the world can be nominated for a H.E.R.O. Award.

**Become a sponsor of the IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards.**

The inaugural IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards raised awareness of the excellent work done by those involved in the maritime SAR community, recognising outstanding bravery and achievements and highlighting innovative new SAR products and technologies.

We are delighted to announce that McMurdo, our trusted SAR partner, will continue their support of the Awards for 2017 as the naming sponsor.

We are also seeking sponsors for the individual awards at the IMRF H.E.R.O. Awards 2017, each sponsorship package is £4000 and in return for sponsoring an award, the IMRF can offer:

• Company name mentioned on H.E.R.O. press releases as award sponsor
• Company name and logo included in social media activity (includes LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter)
• Invitation to present the award to the winner in the sponsored category
• Two complimentary tickets to attend the awards dinner
• Certificate of recognition and thanks
• Full page advertisement in the awards programme (distributed at the event and on the IMRF website)
• Company logo included on the IMRF website H.E.R.O. webpages

For more information please see [http://www.imrhero.org/sponsor-us](http://www.imrhero.org/sponsor-us) or contact Caroline Jupe c.jupe@imrf.org.uk
The IMO considers SAR in London

Dave Jardine-Smith of the IMRF writes:

The Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and SAR (NCSR) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) – the technical body looking after maritime matters for the United Nations – holds its meeting in March each year, at the IMO’s headquarters beside the River Thames in London.

As the only non-governmental SAR organisation with consultative status at the IMO, the IMRF always attends NCSR meetings. It is here that the international community agrees issues of fundamental importance to distress alerting and communications and to SAR response. NCSR also acts as the technical Sub-Committee overseeing the drafting of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual. This year the IMRF was represented at the meeting by Rebecca Jeffries and David Jardine-Smith of the secretariat.

An IMRF summary of the meeting may be found at https://international-maritime-rescue.org/imo-meeting-reports-download/file/1423-ncsr-4-imrf-report-6-10-march-2017. IMO’s full report will be available there in due course. Here we highlight some stand-out items. See the articles ‘Learning from experience – the IMRF’s role recognised by the IMO’ and ‘IMRF to assist in re-development of IMO Model Course on SAR Mission Coordination’ too.

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and night vision equipment

Instances of night vision equipment not detecting LEDs, reported by the IMRF (see ‘In the Dark’ in the August 2016 edition of LIFE LINE, available in the newsletter archive at www.international-maritime-rescue.org) were noted as presenting a significant safety risk. States are encouraged to take action, and the matter has been passed to NCSR’s parent Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) for further action as necessary. IMRF Members who have not already acted on this information are invited to consider it and bring it to the attention of their national authorities as appropriate.

SAR cooperation plans

The Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention requires the development of SAR cooperation plans between passenger ships trading internationally, their operators, and relevant SAR services. Guidance on how this should be done is contained in MSC Circular 1079. Problems with the process having been identified, NCSR has been conducting a review of the Circular, and the IMRF has played a significant role in this review. Final text was agreed at this meeting and, assuming that the MSC approves it, it will be issued as MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 later this year, and will then be available from the IMRF as well as from the IMO’s websites. If you have any questions about this in the meantime, please contact Dave Jardine-Smith at d.jardinesmith@imrf.org.uk.

Maritime Incident Response Groups (MIRG)

The IMRF supported a Finnish paper submitted to this meeting of NCSR on the Baltic Sea MIRG project and the development of joint operational guidelines for international MIRG operations (principally firefighting assistance at sea – see ‘Ship Fires in the Baltic’, in the December 2016 issue of LIFE LINE). While the information provided was welcomed by NCSR, the Sub-Committee decided – after rather brief discussion – not to forward the paper to its SAR Working Group for further consideration. This was unexpected, and unfortunate. On-scene support of the type developed in the MIRG project is a very useful way of addressing the mass rescue operations problem, as well as being a tool in other SAR, environmental protection and salvage responses. The IMRF will continue to promote the MIRG concept, and will report progress to the IMO as and when appropriate.

Vessel Triage

Finland also presented a paper on their Vessel Triage project, reporting the results of trials and an online survey. This too was turned away without being referred to the SAR Working Group for expert assessment. This result seems to reflect misunderstanding of the concept rather than a wholly evidence-based decision: those who have reported trialling the process like it. IMRF Members can still trial and use the process: visit www.raija.fi/vesseltriage.

SAR expert input to international meetings

A general request was made that SAR experts should join technical meetings considering, for example, the Cospas-Sarsat system and the ongoing review of the GMDSS (see below), to present ‘SAR user’ perspectives. The IMRF urges our member organisations to participate where they can.

SAR Points of Contact

The Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat advise that there are still a significant number of non-responsive SAR Points of Contact (SPOCs), which means that emergency beacon distress alerts may not be passed on to Rescue Coordination Centres for action (see ‘SAR Points of Contact’ in the February 2017 edition of LIFE LINE). States are encouraged to offer support and assistance regionally to help address this issue, and can make use of a model agreement developed by Cospas-Sarsat, downloadable from www.cospas-sarsat.int/en/mcc-spoc-model-agreement-template.

GISIS entries

There are still many States which have not completed, or recently updated, their entries in the ‘Global SAR Plan’ module of the IMO’s online Global Integrated Shipping Information System: http://gisis.imo.org. IMRF Members who are, or have influence on, national SAR authorities are invited to check their State’s GISIS entry and take any action necessary. This is very important information – but it’s of little use if it’s incomplete or out of date.

Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS)

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), IMO’s sister organisation at the United Nations, is introducing a GADSS Concept of Operations and amendments to Annex 12 of the International Convention on Civil Aviation (which deals with SAR). Both aeronautical and maritime SAR organisations should follow these developments. There is a clear need for enhanced cooperation between aviation and maritime SAR services in many areas. There’s more information at www.icao.int.

List of documents and publications to be held by Maritime or Joint Rescue Coordination Centres

NCSR 4 reviewed and revised the list, which will be published as SAR.7/Circular 13. The non-mandatory documents listed are now available on the IMO’s public website, www.imo.org, under ‘Our Work’: www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Safety/RadioCommunicationsAndSearchAndRescue/SearchAndRescue/Pages/Default.aspx.
Learning from experience – the IMRF’s role recognised by the IMO

‘Learning from experience’ is the title of our fourth mass rescue operations conference, to be held in Sweden in June: see www.imrfmro.org/homeg4. But it’s not just in such challenging situations that we can usefully learn from each other. And the IMRF is an internationally recognised means of facilitating that learning process.

There is great value in disseminating SAR information – including lessons learned in SAR incidents, accidents, exercises and drills – as widely as possible, so that SAR service personnel can learn from others’ experience and ideas and improve their own preparedness. Why, as they say, reinvent the wheel..?

According to our Articles of Association the IMRF’s objects are “to prevent loss of life, to promote safety and to provide relief from disaster at sea and on inland waters throughout the world by [...]:

•promoting cooperation, exchange of information, research and development, advice and consultancy between maritime search and rescue services of the world;

•encouraging and promoting the formation and development of maritime search and rescue services throughout the world; and

•promoting public education and awareness regarding safety on water.”

Dissemination of lessons learned and other information of use to the SAR community is thus a primary purpose of the IMRF, and sharing information in this way is an excellent way of encouraging SAR development globally.

The IMRF fulfils this function by circulating information to our members, directly and in LIFE LINE, and by placing information on our websites. The great majority of this information is made available on an open-source basis, funded by the IMRF’s member organisations and by charitable grants and donations.

Now the IMRF has been formally recognised by the International Maritime Organization as an important information source.

The IMO is the United Nations’ technical body with responsibility for maritime safety and marine pollution prevention. The IMRF, as a non-governmental organisation with consultative status at the IMO, represents the maritime SAR community at this level.

In March the IMO’s Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) recommended that the IMRF’s information-sharing resources should be used by IMO Member States to help disseminate SAR lessons learned and other information of use to the SAR community. (For more information about NCSR’s other work at its March meeting, please page 6 ‘The IMO considers SAR in London’.)

We very much welcome this endorsement and will be reviewing our structures to ensure that they are fit for this purpose – receiving information and sharing it as agreed with its provider, easily and efficiently, and to the benefit of SAR people (and their ‘customers’) worldwide.

The world’s leading source of globally-agreed SAR guidance is the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual: you can buy copies at a discount at www.imrfbookshop.org. Volume I of the Manual is dedicated to SAR organisation and management, including the development of SAR services. It is intended that the IMRF’s contact details will be added to the list of information sources in this Volume when its next edition is published in 2019.

In the meantime, if you have something about SAR that you would like to share – experience, new developments, initiatives or questions – please do not hesitate to contact us at info@imrf.org.uk or news@imrf.org.uk. And you can visit our website – www.international-maritime-rescue.org – to find all the information that has already been shared.

Remember: it’s good to talk!

Mass Rescue Operations: Learning from Experience

What is a mass rescue operation? The International Maritime Organization defines it as requiring an ‘immediate response to large numbers of persons in distress [when] the capabilities normally available to the SAR authorities are inadequate’. In other words there are too many people to rescue using the resources usually available to us. The IMRF MRO project team call this the ‘capability gap’.

It is the aim of the IMRF’s project to help those preparing for these extremely challenging events to fill that gap. MROs are, thankfully, rare – but that’s all the more reason to be properly prepared for them. This means, first, acknowledging the problem and examining the issues, then planning and training for the day when an MRO is required. Because it’s not ‘if’ but ‘when’...

We can, and should, learn from other people’s experience of MROs – which is what ‘G4’ is all about. The fourth in the IMRF’s acclaimed series of conferences on maritime mass rescue operations will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden, on Monday & Tuesday 12-13 June 2017, with a live exercise during the late afternoon of Sunday 11th as an introduction.
At time of writing, the conference is nearly sold out – so if you want to come and haven’t booked yet, hurry! Visit www.imrfmro.org/homeg4, email info@imrf.org.uk, or phone +44 (0)1569 767405. And, if you have booked, watch the website for further news.

This will be an excellent opportunity to discuss the issues common to maritime MROs – and we mean ‘discuss’. The IMRF’s MRO conferences bring together leading experts in the field, enabling attendees to talk the issues through rather than simply listen to lectures.

The programme begins with a live mass rescue exercise, starting at 1600 on Sunday 11 June and followed by refreshments on the quayside. This will not just be an exercise to watch: you will be invited to participate. But don’t worry: this is not a test! Indeed, we hope that you will take part in a role different to your usual one.

The conference aim, after all, is to learn from experience!

On Monday 12th & Tuesday 13th June the main conference will take place in the Swedish Sea Rescue Society’s fine headquarters. It will be inter-active, with a clear focus on the real issues. You will be able to hear about others’ experiences, to consider in depth the challenges associated with maritime mass rescue operations, and to discuss solutions to these challenges.

The full programme may be found at www.imrfmro.org/practical-infooutline-programme. As you will see, the conference has been designed around a number of mass rescue case studies: the Lisco Gloria case in 2010, the Le Boréal in 2015, and the Caribbean Fantasy last year. These cases will be used to introduce the various MRO topics within overall themes of planning, rescue, coordination, and communications. Expert panellists will give short, to-the-point presentations to inform the discussion.

Topics covered will include:
- Planning roles and responsibilities, nationally, internationally and organisationally
- Filling the ‘capability gap’ – additional and regional resources, and support on scene
- Rescue – retrieval, support during rescue, places of safety and accounting for all those involved
- Coordination at sea, on land and in the air – and overall Communications – priorities, systems, structures
- Public relations – the news media, the wider public and those directly involved; and
- Training, exercising, and learning from experience.

If you cannot join us in Gothenburg this time, make sure to watch for reports of the conference on the IMRF website and in in future editions of LIFE LINE.

Mass Rescue Operations: IMRF’s first subject-matter expert course

Our conferences are only one result of our MRO project. We have made available a wide range of material, including subject-specific guidance developed by our project team, at www.imrfmro.org, and we run an ongoing series of MRO workshops, enabling emergency responders around the world to get together and focus on these most challenging of SAR cases.

Our MRO subject-matter training course is the next step. The first in what we expect will be a series of these courses will be held at Chalmers University in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 14-16 June 2017, immediately after our MRO conference. It is now fully booked, but we hope to provide others, elsewhere in the world, to meet the obvious demand.

We believe that these courses will be of significant value in improving MRO preparedness. Learning outcomes for those attending will include an enhanced ability to identify, analyse and understand the problems, and to propose solutions. This learning can then be applied by attendees when they get back home.

It is important to note that these courses are not for everyone. They are primarily intended for senior managers such as national SAR Coordinators, other strategic planners, and trainers. A wide knowledge of maritime SAR systems and procedures, as set out in the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, is a prerequisite for attendance.

Places on each course must be strictly limited, to enable everyone attending to participate fully. If you are interested in future events, or you would like to enquire about sponsorship opportunities or IMRF membership, please email info@imrf.org.uk or telephone +44 (0)1569 767405.
Fight or flight – when to initiate a mass evacuation at sea?

One of the hardest decisions a Ship’s Master will ever have to make is surely the one to abandon a vessel with thousands of passengers onboard whilst at sea. So what should influence this decision and how much time do they have? Here Dave Sheppard, manager of the IMRF’s Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG) explains more:

Objective decision influences

Much of the decision making process could be considered as objective with sound technical guidance and advice used in the design and implementation of the evacuation process. This is underpinned within SOLAS Regulation III/21.1.4 that requires all survival craft shall be capable of being launched with their full complement of persons within a period of 30 minutes from the time the abandon ship signal is given. However, this regulation stipulates that the 30 minute timeframe only starts when all the passengers have been mustered with lifejackets donned.

In addition MSC Circular 1533 provides an evacuation analysis tool that recommends a maximum allowable total passenger ship evacuation time to be in the range of 60 to 80 minutes dependent on the number of main (fire) vertical zones:
- **60 minutes**: Applies to ships having no more than three main vertical (fire) zones
- **80 minutes**: Applies to ships having more than three main vertical (fire) zones

The analysis tool contained in MSC Circular 1533 sets out an evacuation model that is broken down into key stages:

- **Awareness time (A)** *which should be 10 minutes for night time and 5 minutes for day time*
- **Travel time (T)** *Embarkation time (E)* *Launching time (L)*

*See footnote for definitions

These parameters are brought together in a formula to identify the total evacuation time (n):

$$\text{Calculated total evacuation time (n)} = 1.25 (A + T) + 2/3 (E + L) \leq n$$

Additionally the Master will know that there are a number of safeguards designed into the vessel, such as fixed installations and compartmentation that will provide a degree of protection. For example a Class A bulkhead will provide a minimum of 60 minutes protection from fire and a Class B bulkhead 30 minutes of protection.

Subjective decision influences

It is absolutely correct that the vessel remains the best liferaft the Master is unlikely to know with any certainty of the length of time that the vessel will retain its integrity prior to becoming a hazard in its own right. This variable will be influenced by a range of factors, many of which the Master may never have experienced previously.

The Master has the ship’s crew who they can use to try and mitigate the cause of the situation e.g. fire teams that may be able to deploy to resolve or contain any situation. The challenge for the Master in this scenario is that it will take time to understand whether or not the intervention is working and that time delay may prove critical in terms of being able to complete a ‘successful’ abandonment.

Further the Master has the ability to be able to weigh up all options based on what the objective data is telling them and come to a more considered answer based on their training, knowledge and experience although this does also introduce a whole range of variables based on the Master’s critical decision making ability.

The risk with all of the above is that the critical thinking time required to make the decision will be using up part of the total evacuation time and may lead to an increased level of risk for the passengers and crew if the abandonment time then exceeds the survivability duration of the vessel.

The Master will also have to consider whether the provision of external assistance might be available to the vessel within a timeframe that is able to influence their decision e.g. can sufficient SAR resources be on scene to manage the evacuees or can additional resources be brought to the vessel to contain the situation on board but again this consideration features a number of variables that require consideration.

Conclusion

Whilst the current evacuation analysis contained in MSC Circular 1533 is clear and carefully considered around the elements of objective decision influences there may be a case some additional work around the subjective decision influences as these have the potential to lead to an extension of the total evacuation time. This risks exceeding the survivability of the vessel and exposing the passengers and crew to an increased risk.

However ultimately it must always be remembered that the decision of whether/when to abandon or remain on the vessel is probably best categorised as ‘consequence management’ because either outcome has the potential to cause harm. All the Master can seek to do is mitigate that harm as far as reasonably practicable. Others will judge any decision taken but they will have the two great advantages of using hindsight and not having to make the often unenviable real decision themselves.

Further the Master will have to consider whether the provision of external assistance might be available to the vessel within a timeframe that is able to influence their decision e.g. can sufficient SAR resources be on scene to manage the evacuees or can additional resources be brought to the vessel to contain the situation on board but again this consideration features a number of variables that require consideration.

For information on this, and other MIRG topics, go to [http://imrfmirg.org](http://imrfmirg.org)
IMRF to assist in re-development of IMO Model Course on SAR Mission Coordination

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) publishes Model Courses, designed as templates for Member States’ use in developing training across a range of maritime subjects. There are three courses on SAR, related to the three volumes of the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual.

The latest editions of the courses on SAR administration (IAMSAR Volume I) and the On Scene Coordinator function (Volume III) were published in 2014, and are available from the IMRF’s online bookshop at www.imrfbookshop.org. However, the course on the SAR Mission Coordinator function (Volume II) has fallen out of the review process, and is not currently available.

At its meeting in March 2017 the IMO’s Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) agreed to re-develop the SAR mission coordination course, with the aim of approving the revised course at its 2019 session for subsequent re-publication later that year. The United States will lead the re-development of this model course, assisted by other States and NGOs, including the IMRF.

The IMRF’s interest in all three of the IMO’s Model Courses on SAR stems from our fundamental aim of improving maritime SAR globally. This includes facilitating training in SAR administration and operations, including SAR mission coordination and on-scene coordination. Up-to-date courses approved by the IMO are a very useful tool in this respect.

We will therefore support the re-development of the currently missing SAR Mission Coordinator Model Course as best we can.

SafeTrx Raises Distress Alarm on Capsized RIB in South Africa

Designed in close co-operation with Coast Guard and Sea Rescue organisations, SafeTrx is a proven maritime safety platform that helps reduce the risk of maritime accidents and the loss of human lives at sea. It is the world’s leading maritime search and rescue application with over 750,000 recorded hours of use around the world. SafeTrx is the standard marine mobile safety platform in nine countries: Ireland, UK, The Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Australia, Germany, Spain and South Africa.

When an Emergency or Assistance Call is made through the SafeTrx app, it sends the end users position, speed and heading information obtained from the Smartphone’s GPS to the SafeTrx server. The MRCC can access this critical information through the SafeTrx Monitoring Console. Likewise, when a trip exceeds its estimated time of arrival, a series of SMS messages is sent the end users emergency contacts. With access to location data, vessel and emergency contact information, SafeTrx shortens the uncertainty phase in an overdue case and reduces SAR response times as a result.

In a statement, the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) said on Monday 17th April, NSRI Mykonos station commander Casper Frylink reported the Mykonos lifeboat station was activated by the Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) following a SafeTrx distress call received from 2 persons on a capsized RHIB off-shore of Gonnemanskraal, Jacobsbaai. Reporting a third person was still under water scuba diving from their boat at the capsized position, they made an emergency call using the SafeTrx app to the MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre) to raise the alarm. The MRCC used the information sent from the SafeTrx app to locate and assist the callers. In addition, family in Cape Town who had also received the SafeTrx overdue SMS message, contacted friends in Jacobsbaai who launched their private boat to go to assist.

Persons on board were off-duty NSRI coxswains on a recreational day diving and were commended for having all safety measures and equipment at hand to initiate an immediate rescue response. In addition to raising the alarm via SafeTrx, they set off red distress flares at delayed intervals and deployed the anchor to prevent the upturned boat from drifting onto rocks. The red distress flares were noticed by campers at Trekoskraal who launched their recreational craft and came to assist. After surfacing, the scuba diver made a call for assistance and to confirm their position using a handheld Marine VHF radio that he recovered from their upturned craft. On arrival to the scene, NSRI assisted to right the capsized RIB and was towed to shore.

SafeTrx assisted the incident response Operators in directing SAR resources and communicating critical information to the relevant responders.

Full incident report can be found at: https://t.co/84V3XQQ8bq

Practical training improving SAR response in Morocco

In April Norwegian trainers from Redningsselskapet (RS) were in Larache, Morocco working with SAR crew from the Morocco Ministry of fisheries rescue vessel Loukous.

The training is part of the IMRF Global SAR development project which is looking at improving the SAR coordination and response in the African regions. The Head of International Projects for RS, Vivi K. Lundgren Schumann, coordinated the activity with IMRF Regional Coordinator and Head of RCC Rabat, Mohammed Drissi. An official ceremony was held to welcome the team from RS and reflect on both the value of these type of training events and the challenges SAR services face in Morocco.

RS instructors Christian Strøm and Tommy Gjerland identified “There is a difference in the type of operations we do in Norway and the operations they do in Morocco, but the basic skills needed to assist people and vessels in distress are pretty much the same all over the world.”

The main focus with this SAR training course has been to demonstrate some of the SAR techniques used in Norway. Each day started with a lecture in the classroom followed by an exercise at sea. The purpose of the practical exercises is to see how the crew operates and solves the tasks in order to come up with suggestions for improvements.

“It is important to understand that our intention is not to criticise the way they solve the SAR operations but to see if our experience in this field can help the crew to improve their performance” says Vivi.

The training focused on First aid, including CPR and hypothermia as well as techniques for pickup of personnel from the water and search and rescue patterns. It also
We would like to thank the IMRF and (see page 12) and on the development of a regional web-site to help promote the faster entry of SAR units across national borders and the arrangements between states can be established to allow reported regionally in an annual report; identifying how of recording and sharing statistical data so this could be training needs of each country; developing a common way regional SAR development including; reviewing the successes and how these have been achieved

The meeting established a number of actions to help IMO to assist in bringing these organisations together. I

The meeting was a success with one of the key key learnings being the importance of having clear communications in the dynamic maritime environment and also the need for regular exercises to ensure the team are clear about their responsibilities.

IMRF member RS have had a busy 24 months internationally with activities including providing a Rescue Cruiser and crew as part of the Frontex fleet patrolling the waters off Greece rescuing thousands of migrants in distress. They also secured funding from the Norwegian ministry to support the development of the Hellenic Rescue Team, who were on the forefront of the migrant crisis, with training for the HRT volunteers at the RS training facility in Norway (see page 12) and on the waters of the Aegean Sea, as well as providing locally built rescue boats.

The Republic of Namibia host Regional SAR Meeting

Swakopmund (German for “Mouth of the Swakop”) is the 4th largest population centre in The Republic of Namibia, with the Namib Desert on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other side. On the 3-4 April this year it was the host town for the 4th Session of the maritime SAR coordinating committee for the Southern African Maritime SAR Region (SAMSRR).

Representatives from the SAR authorities of South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Comoros and Namibia spent 2 days reviewing the regional SAR development and updating the neighbouring countries on SAR development in their organisations.

These regional meetings are a key component to the IMRF Global SAR development project, working in partnership with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Technical Cooperation Committee. The forums have been a catalyst to the development work being facilitated by the IMRF in 4 of the 5 SAR regional groups in Africa and this was the first meeting of SAMSRR that the IMRF have attended. CEO Bruce Reid, represented the IMRF at the meeting and he noted there are common themes across the regional meetings with resourcing/funding SAR services and SAR training always near the top and as Bruce explained: “We have been fortunate to have funding through the IMO to assist in bringing these organisations together. I think that it helps to see that the challenges you are facing are shared by other organisations in the region. The major benefit of these forums though is the ability to share the successes and how these have been achieved”

The training was always near the top and as Bruce explained:

The training was a success with one of the key key learnings being the importance of having clear communications in the dynamic maritime environment and also the need for regular exercises to ensure the team are clear about their responsibilities.

Following on from the meeting the African Region SAR Organisation and Management Training course was held. This course is an initiative of the IMRF Global SAR Development Project, in partnership with the IMO and it was facilitated by Mr. J Blows (RMRCC Chief), Mr. N Tshibalanganda (RMRCC Cape Town SMC) and Mr. M Roberts (RMRCC Cape Town SMC).

The course improves the knowledge of search and rescue administration, in particular Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) and its Sub-Centres (MRSCs), giving insight into what is required in setting up an effective and efficient SAR system. By providing a consistent level of training in the African Regions this will help improve maritime SAR coordination and response as well as enhance cooperation between the Regional MRCC (R-MRCC) established in Cape Town, Republic of South Africa and the Maritime Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC) established in the Region.

Mr Blows noted “We would like to thank the IMRF and the IMO for making the course possible. The hosts also need to be thanked for the hospitality and enthusiastic participation in the training.”

Herald of Free Enterprise remembered

30 years ago, on 6 March 1987, the ro-ro passenger ferry Herald of Free Enterprise sailed for Dover, in southeast England, from Zeebrugge, Belgium, with her bow doors still open. Water entered her vehicle decks in large quantities, destabilising the ship, and she rolled over in the port approaches. Of the 539 people aboard, 193 died.

It would have been far more if the ship had not happened to roll onto a sand bar, ending up on her side, semi-submerged, instead of capsizing completely. (In this respect the Herald’s story is similar to that of the Costa Concordia, some 25 years later.)

A huge and complex rescue effort commenced as night fell, involving SAR units, nearby merchant ships, harbour craft, and units of the Belgian Navy, who had been taking part in an exercise nearby. Members of the Herald’s own crew and passenger complement also worked heroically on and in the hull, to save many lives. Many lessons learned in the accident were subsequently acted upon by the IMO and other authorities. However, as we know, the risk of similar events – rare, but extremely challenging to respond to – continues to exist.

On 6 March 2017 memorial events were held in both Dover and Zeebrugge, to mark the 30th anniversary of the disaster. The IMRF’s David Jardine-Smith was one of the speakers in Belgium, at the invitation of the Government of West-Vlaanderen Province. David explained the ongoing work of our mass rescue operations project to a gathering which included people who had been involved in the response all those years ago.

They will never forget the Herald – and neither should we.
Over a period of two years Redningsselskapet have been organising training courses for the members of HRT. The first two courses held at Sjøredningsskolen in Horten, had only male delegates and the next two courses had just a few female delegates and RS were keen to encourage females to attend future courses. RS have had positive experiences of facilitating courses just for women in the past as this allowed for different training styles to be used and so the decision was made to make the most recent course a female only course.

The course was a great success and the delegates were given a full week of training that was aimed to give them skills to take back to HRT. The sessions included HUET/Capsize theory and training in pool, boat handling and communication and SAR-training. Here is what the delegates had to say about their time at RS:

**Eliza Patrinou.**
Generally, I can say it was a complete education week! All the people of RS welcomed us with open arms and incredible warmth! Our instructors with deep knowledge and experiences was beside us in every move and always willing to answer any questions!

**Evmorfia Dania**
Training by RS was a great learning experience! We learned so many useful things that will help us continue saving more lives. We will try to share this knowledge to all our colleagues in HRT. Thank you for everything!!!

**Vaso Giantsidou**
My answer to your question is only positive and i believe that our training with RS was a unique and exquisite experience…the knowledge we gained was plenty, diverse and useful, and I’m sure it will help us with our future course as rescuers!

**Popi Tado**
One week training with RS in Norway was a great experience for me!! I’m happy because I had the opportunity to learn many things from people who are experts in SAR! All trainers was excellent, ready to answer to any question we had, with patience and with simple words! They also help us to do things that seemed to be impossible for us to do,(like the helicopter in the pool)! All people that they welcome us, was excellent also.

**Varvara Meliadou**
To be educated from RS, one of the best Rescue teams in the history of lifesaving at sea, it was something that I really wanted. The first thing that I thought was that we the women can achieve everything! And here is the time where 12 rescue women from HRT were trained in the “home” of RS. In the place where the training has its highest standards, the rescue training center is fully equipped (and they prepare the new one), and finally with high level of instructors.

It is fantastic to see one of our oldest members supporting one of our newest members. Norway was actually present at the very first International Lifeboat Conference, in 1924, and they are still working towards fulfilling the goal of promoting cooperation between the world’s existing lifeboat services and assisting in the establishment of new lifeboat services.

If you want to know more about the IMRF Members Assisting Members project then please contact info@imrf.org.uk or go to https://international-maritime-rescue.org/aboutmam.

If you have a maritime SAR story that you would like included in LIFE LINE email us at news@imrf.org.uk