A template mass rescue operations plan

Overview

The IMRF’s mass rescue operations (MRO) guidance is provided in 30 separate chapters at www.international-maritime-rescue.org. For downloadable documents referenced in this chapter please use the drop-down menus or return to the MRO project main page under ‘Resources’. For a general introduction please see chapter 1, ‘Complex incident planning – the challenge: acknowledging the problem, and mass rescue incident types’.

1. A template

1.1 Below you will find a template for a mass rescue operations plan. This template is provided to assist your planning process: a viable MRO plan can only be completed locally.

1.2 You should not follow the template if it does not meet your local requirements. It may be that you already have such a plan and, if referring to this template at all, you are only checking that you have ‘covered all the bases’. It may also be that your MRO planning is, or will be, part of wider planning for the response to any complex incident; that is, any incident which will require special arrangements to be put in place in order to deal with it. It is recommended that MRO plans should at least be closely linked to such wider planning.

1.3 Your own plan may not look the same as the template: that is not important. What is important is that the plan should be ‘SMARTA’! There are various interpretations of this acronym, but in this case let’s agree that it stands for

- **SPECIFIC** – mass rescue operations have been thoroughly considered and planned for
- **MEANINGFUL** – the plan is focussed and sufficiently detailed
- **ATTAINABLE** – all stakeholders have agreed that the plan will work in practice; which means that its users must be trained in it and ‘own’ it
- **RELEVANT** – the plan must be realistic, based on actual resources and capabilities
- **TRACKED** – the plan must be up-to-date: a controlled document
- **ACCESSIBLE** – all users must know where to find it, and must readily understand their own part in it.
1.4 ‘SMARTERS’ is another version of the acronym, in which ‘E’, ‘R’ & ‘S’ stand for ‘Evaluate’ and ‘Re-evaluate’ – the assessment part of the process that keeps the plan alive – and ‘Satisfactory’: the plan satisfies its owners’ strategic vision.

2 Summary
   o The template below supports the guidance in chapter 5.
   o The template is intended only as a planning aid: planning must be done locally, and the resulting plan need not follow the template.
   o The plan developed should be ‘SMARTA’.

3 A mass rescue operations plan template\(^1\)

1) **PLAN TITLE\(^2\)**

2) **PLAN ADMINISTRATION\(^3\)**
   o Name & full contact details for the lead plan administrator, usually the SAR Coordinator\(^4\) or his/her delegate
   o Contents page
   o Tabulated distribution list
     ▪ plan copy number (for example, ‘Copy no.1’)
     ▪ the name of the organisation holding this copy
     ▪ the name & contact details for the primary contact person within that organisation for plan administration purposes\(^5\)
   o Tabulated record of agreed changes
     ▪ the amendment number
     ▪ the name and signature of the person making the amendment
     ▪ the date the amendment was made
   o Tabulated list of effective pages\(^6\)
     ▪ the page number
     ▪ if the page is not the original, its amendment number
     ▪ the date of the original or amended page
   o Tabulated audit record
     ▪ the date the audit was carried out
     ▪ the name, contact details and signature of the auditor
     ▪ the auditor’s notes

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\(^1\) The MRO planner should also refer to IAMSAR Manual Volume I Chapter 6.6 and Volume II Chapter 6.15 and Appendix C.

\(^2\) As agreed by the stakeholders: likely to include a reference to the geographical area(s) covered by the plan.

\(^3\) This section ensures that all stakeholders are holding the latest version of the plan. This will need to be assured periodically by audit.

\(^4\) As defined in the IAMSAR Manual. See chapter 18.

\(^5\) In most cases this will be an administrator, not the primary contact for use in actual emergencies.

\(^6\) That is, a list of the most up-to-date amendments to the plan, listed page by page. It is recommended that amendments be issued as whole pages, to facilitate updating.
3) **INTRODUCTION**
   - Simple description of the plan’s purpose
   - Description of the geographical area(s) covered by the plan, including charts or maps
   - How the plan is constructed
   - Generic definition of a mass rescue operation
   - Summary of the risks that might generate an MRO in the area(s) covered by the plan

4) **STAKEHOLDERS**
   - Tabulated list of those compiling the plan, including the lead planner, and identifying for each stakeholder:
     - the name of the individual organisation
     - the name & 24-hour contact details for the primary contact within the organisation for use in emergencies, when activating or considering activating this plan
     - a summary of the organisation’s responsibilities, with particular reference to mass rescue operations
     - a summary of the organisation’s mass rescue capabilities

5) **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**
   - a description of the overall concept of operations, including:
     - details of the command, control & coordination structure
     - the strategic, tactical and operational levels of response
     - responses to different types of mass rescue requirement

6) **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED**
   - a brief explanation of the ‘capability gap’ inherent in mass rescue operations

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7 It may be that this will be a complete plan, detailing all its users’ responses – but it is more likely that it will be a document linking the various response organisations’ own major incident plans. The latter is preferable, as individual users do not need to know everything about other organisations’ internal procedures.

8 It is recommended that the IAMSAR definitions of ‘rescue’ and ‘mass rescue operation’ be included here. See chapter 1.

9 See chapter 3.

10 This might be an individual but is more likely to be the organisation’s control or coordination centre. 24-hour contacts should be provided whenever possible, except for stakeholders without a response role who have agreed that office-hour notification is sufficient for them.

11 A particular class of stakeholder are companies operating passenger ships on international routes, which are required by the SOLAS Convention to compile cooperation plans with relevant SAR authorities. States may require other operators to draw up similar plans. Where this is the case, the SAR cooperation plan should be mentioned in and/or linked to the MRO plan. See chapter 25.

12 This will include the area(s) covered by the organisation, its coordination centres, communications facilities, response units available (maritime, aeronautical, on land), units’ search and rescue capabilities, operational limitations, etc.

13 See chapter 17.

14 See chapter 5, section 8.

15 See chapter 4.
7) **Communications**
   - A description of the communications network to be used when the plan is implemented:
     - Priorities
     - Systems
     - Structures

8) **Public Relations**
   - A description of the public relations arrangements under the communications plan, including coordinated news media response arrangements.

9) **Alerting**
   - A description of how the need for a mass rescue operation is identified, and by whom.
   - A description of the primary alerting process.
   - A description of the mobilisation or ‘tasking’ process.

10) **Search and Rescue**
    - A general description of how a search will be organised, and by whom.
    - A general description of how rescue will be carried out, including how survivors will be supported during rescue.
    - A description of ‘places of safety’, including any specific locations agreed.

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16 See chapters 13, 14 & 15 and IAMSAR Volume II Chapter 6.15. This section will include an acknowledgement that responding organisations will need to identify additional resources to support their own operations (relief and support staff, extra communications links and working spaces, etc) as part of their own in-house planning.

17 Ships which happen to be in the area at the time of the incident, for example.

18 See chapter 25.

19 See chapter 7.

20 If this plan is part of, or linked to, stakeholders’ wider planning for major or complex incidents, requiring more than the normal response, this identification process will be linked to the process for declaring a major incident to other stakeholders.

21 Alerting should be a ‘cascade’ process. Primary response organisations will alert their lead partners, who will in turn alert their own partner organisations, and so on. The cascade will include the alerting of the additional facilities required to fill the capability gap: shipping in the area, etc. The plan should make clear who will alert whom, and by what means.

22 Units will be mobilised in response to the incident. The plan should include, in its communications section, the network required to manage communications with these units efficiently; especially whom they should contact when mobilised, for instructions and to pass information. Where practicable, these communications links will be the same as those used in ‘routine’ operations, at least for initial tasking. An MRO will involve a significant communications load, but the additional links are likely to be at the tactical and strategic levels.

23 ‘Rescue’ is used here in the sense defined by the IMO: the “operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs and deliver them to a place of safety”: see chapters 8 & 10.

24 A ‘place of safety’ is defined by the IMO as “a location where rescue operations are considered to terminate; where the survivors’ safety of life is no longer threatened and where their basic human needs (such as food, shelter and medical needs)
11) **ACCOUNTING FOR THOSE INVOLVED**
   - a description of the process for ensuring that everyone involved in the mass rescue operation has been accounted for

12) **CONCLUSION OF MASS RESCUE OPERATIONS**
   - a description of the process for agreeing that the mass rescue operation is at an end

13) **VIPs**
   - a description of how the involvement of important visitors will be handled

14) **BUSINESS CONTINUITY**
   - a description of arrangements to ensure that stakeholders’ routine work can continue while the mass rescue operation is under way

15) **TRAINING, TESTING & REVIEW**
   - a summary of the arrangements for joint training in, and testing of, this plan
   - a summary of the plan review process

16) **GLOSSARY OF TERMS & ABBREVIATIONS**

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can be met; and, a place from which transportation arrangements can be made for the survivors’ next or final destination. A place of safety may be on land, or it may be on board a rescue unit or other suitable vessel or facility at sea that can serve as a place of safety until the survivors are disembarked at their next destination.” See chapter 11.

25 This will include all those directly involved in an incident, including response team members deployed to the scene. Information provided should include people’s current location (if known) and their condition if in need of medical assistance, confirmed dead, missing, etc. See chapter 9.

26 In a high-profile operation it is likely that VIPs (Very Important People) will wish to visit the scene of the action and/or responding organisations, to show support etc. This must be planned for in such a way that their involvement does not impinge on the effectiveness of the operation. See chapter 7.

27 This will usually be a matter for individual organisations to arrange internally. However, it will be beneficial to summarise such arrangements in this plan: giving alternative first points of contact for work unrelated to the MRO, for example, or explaining how deployed resources will be substituted.

28 See chapters 26 & 28.

29 The SOLAS Convention requires certain passenger ships to conduct exercises with SAR authorities: see chapter 28.

30 This will include procedures for reviewing the results of exercises or drills and actual MROs: see chapters 29 & 30. To encourage ‘ownership’, the responsibility of individual plan users to highlight any discrepancies in, or potential improvements to, the plan should be noted here: see chapter 2.

31 Different organisations use different terms, abbreviations, etc. Those which may be used in inter-organisational communications, and which might be misunderstood, should be listed here, with explanations.