

SAR Co-operation Plan

Parts 3–6



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Introduction

The preparation of a SAR co-operation plan is required under Chapter V, Section 7.3 of the SOLAS Convention:

Passenger ships, to which chapter I applies, shall have on board a plan for co-operation with appropriate search and rescue services in event of an emergency. The plan shall be developed in co-operation between the ship, the company (ship-owner) as defined in regulation IX/1, and the search and rescue services. The plan shall include provisions for periodic exercises to be undertaken to test its effectiveness. The plan shall be developed based on the guidelines developed by the Organisation (IMO).

A SAR co-operation plan must be developed by the ship, ship-owner and the SAR (search and rescue) services in accordance with the guidelines of the International Maritime Organization IMO (MSC / Circ. 1079 with appendices). The aim of SAR co-operation planning is to enhance mutual understanding between a ship, the ship-owner and SAR services so that in the event of an emergency, all three parties will be able to work together efficiently. The information included in the plan must be readily available and up to date.

Description of a SAR Co-operation Plan

A SAR co-operation plan shall consist of six parts that contain information on the ship-owner (Part 1), ships (Part 2), SAR services (Parts 3 and 4), media relations (Part 5) and periodic exercises (Part 6). Further instructions on the development of a SAR co-operation plan is provided in the Maritime Rescue Instructions and on the web site of the Finnish Border Guard at www.raja.fi/sar.

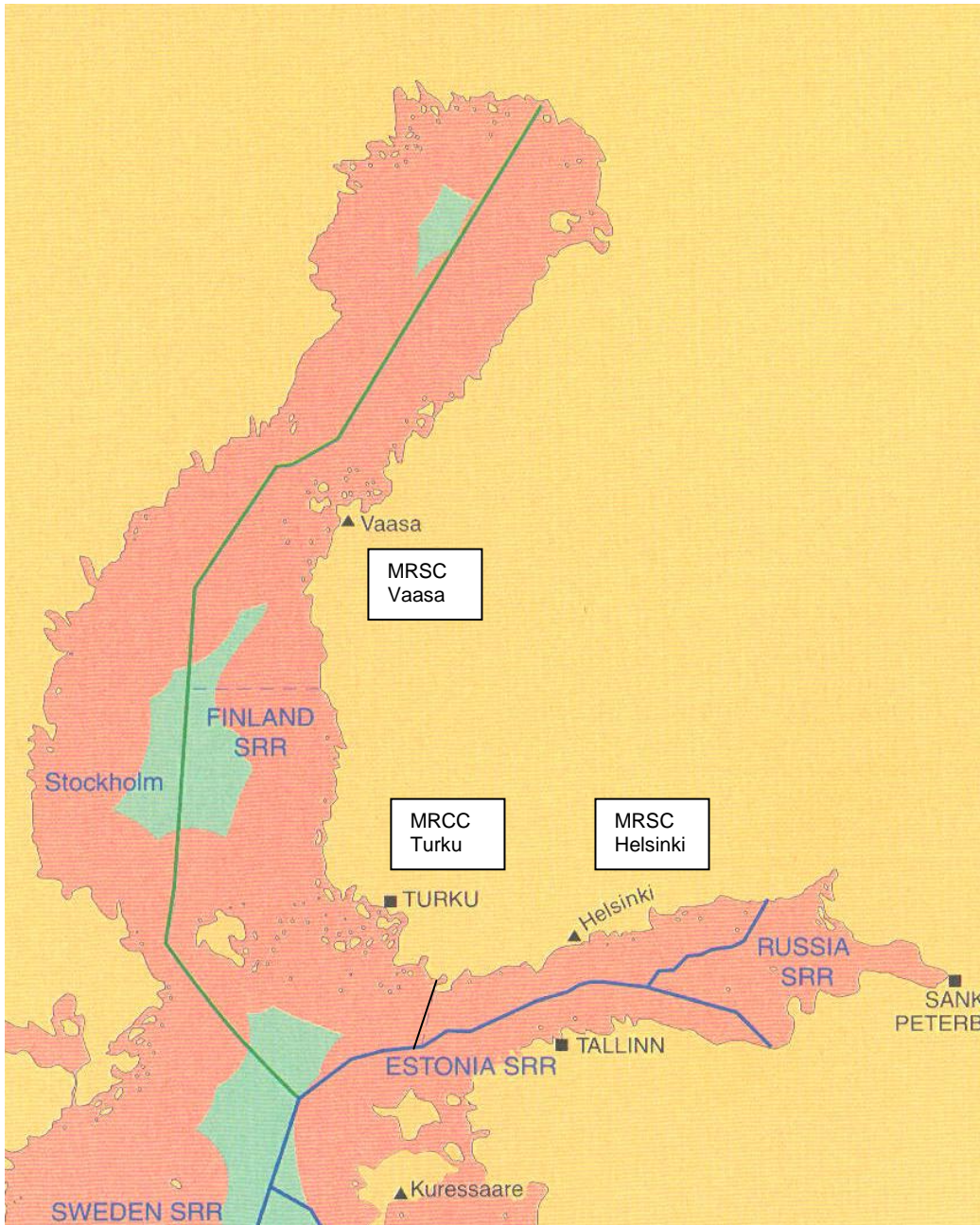
Corrections and Updating

Minor corrections to the SAR co-operation plan may be notified by e-mail directly to the relevant Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre or sub-centre. Examples of such corrections are changes in telephone numbers or contact persons. More extensive changes to the ship and ship-owner details must be corrected by means of an updated SAR co-operation plan or part thereof. The SAR co-operation plan is checked for up-to-datedness annually in connection with other inspections conducted on the ship.



Part 3 Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre and Sub-centres

3.1 Search and Rescue Regions and Sub-regions





3.2 Search and Rescue Mission Co-ordinator (SMC)

The Search and Rescue Mission Co-ordinator (SMC) is a border guard specifically trained to co-ordinate the SAR activities at a Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre or sub-centre.

The SMC determines the phase of emergency and is responsible for alerting the units needed for the task. He/she leads and co-ordinates the operation of the rescue units in the search and rescue sub-region by determining their duties, providing them with the necessary orders, instructions and information, maintaining the preconditions for their activities, and requesting additional resources as required by the mission. The SMC decides on the suspension and termination of the search and rescue activities and on the release from duty of the units ordered to participate in the SAR mission.

3.3 On-scene Co-ordinator (OSC)

The On-scene Co-ordinator (OSC) is a person who, under the command of the SMC, is responsible for leading and co-ordinating SAR operations at the scene of the accident.

If necessary, the SMC may also assign another OSC who, under the command of the SMC, is responsible for leading SAR activities outside the distressed ship at the scene of the accident.

The person assigned as an OSC shall be an official with in-depth knowledge of the duties involved. A competent person other than an official can also be temporarily assigned as an OSC in urgent cases where it is deemed necessary in order to save human lives.

3.4 Aircraft Co-ordinator (ACO)

The ACO (Aircraft Co-ordinator) duties require special knowledge of aircraft operations. Aiming at the effective co-ordination of aircraft, the ACO activities seek to contribute to aeronautical rescue and SAR services with a clearly improving effect. The methods employed are based on highly developed routines.

In the Finnish ACO model, the SMC, who is based in a maritime rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre, is assisted by a Border Guard official who is ACO trained and is familiar with effective SAR co-ordination models and possesses the required co-ordination capabilities. Where possible, ACO-trained air traffic control personnel can be requested from Finavia to assist him/her in his/her duties. If there are two ACOs, efforts must be made to have them work as partners. In certain special cases, the ACO may operate at the scene of the accident.



3.5 Finnish Maritime Assistance Services (MAS)

MRCC Turku is responsible for providing Maritime Assistance Services (MAS) within the Finnish Search and Rescue Region. The purpose of MAS is to support the contingency planning and preventive measures within the search and rescue services in preparation for maritime hazards and emergencies. Ships also serve as an unambiguous national contact points for assistance requests and notifications.



Part 4 SAR Facilities

4.1 Finnish Search and Rescue Region (SRR)

4.1.1 Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) and Maritime Rescue Sub-centres (MRSC)

The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) and sub-centres (MRSC) are responsible for maintaining immediate leadership and communication preparedness in their respective search and rescue sub-regions, and for the radio communication in situations of distress in maritime rescue. The Search and Rescue Mission Co-ordinator (SMC) operating in an MRCC or MRSC is responsible for leading the search and rescue activities and for sending assistance for those in distress at sea. In his/her duties, he/she is assisted by the personnel of the MRCC or MRSC.

The MRCC or MRSC receives emergency alarms from people who are in distress at sea through channels such as:

- telephone
- VHF and MF-DSC emergency safety call frequencies
- VHF and MF-DSC voice emergency frequencies
- COSPAS-SARSAT distress alarm reception system

SAR AREA OF WESTERN FINLAND

MRCC Turku

P.O. Box 16 (Eerikinkatu 40–42)
FI-20101 Turku

MRSC Vaasa

Niemeläntie 34
FI-65100 Vaasa

SAR AREA OF THE GULF OF FINLAND

MRSC Helsinki

P.O. Box 150 (Katajanokanlaituri 4 B)
FI-00161 Helsinki



4.1.2 Communications

The national alarm number of maritime rescue is

0204 1000

(+358 204 1000 when calling from outside of Finland)

RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

VHF-DSC 70
VHF channel 16
MF-DSC 2187.5 kHz

SAR Area of Western Finland

Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre

MRCC Turku

On-call 24 h / day	
Alarm number	+358 (0)204 1001
Telephone	+358 (0)71 8720 100
Fax	+358 (0)71 8720 109
MAS	+358 (0)71 8720 111
Inmarsat-C	423002211 (AOR-E)
E-mail	mrcc@raja.fi
Radio call	MRCC Turku
MMSI	002301000

Maritime Rescue Sub-centre

MRSC Vaasa

On-call 24 h / day	
Alarm number	+358 (0)204 1003
Telephone	+358 (0)71 8720 300
Fax	+358 (0)71 8720 309
E-mail	mrsc.vaasa@raja.fi
Radio call	MRSC Vaasa
MMSI	002303000

SAR Area of the Gulf of Finland

Maritime Rescue Sub-centre

MRSC Helsinki

On-call 24 h / day	
Alarm number	+358 (0)204 1002
Telephone	+358 (0)71 8720 200
Fax	+358 (0)71 8720 209
E-mail	mrsc.helsinki@raja.fi
Radio call	MRSC Helsinki
MMSI	002302000



4.1.3 General Description of SAR Units and Other Resources

The emergency preparedness and availability of the SAR units vary according to the season and weather conditions. The number of available units is significantly smaller during winter because the majority of boats must be docked due to the ice. Patrol vessels, hovercrafts and different types of ice vehicles are used in ice-covered sea areas during the winter season.

The coast guard stations maintain a 24-hour emergency preparedness based on a risk analysis and action plan drawn up for the purpose. In practice, the different emergency preparedness arrangements make it possible for a patrol to take off within 10 to 60 minutes depending on the place and time. When on duty, patrol vessels are on immediate 24-hour readiness.

The Finnish Border Guard maintains SAR helicopter operations in three flight bases located in Turku, Helsinki and Rovaniemi. Their emergency preparedness is based on a risk analysis and an action plan. The preparedness arrangements make it possible for a helicopter to take off within 10 to 60 minutes. The on-call duty service may be temporarily interrupted at no more than one flight base at a time.

The surveillance aircrafts of the Finnish Border Guard are not in continuous readiness; instead, their emergency preparedness is based on a risk analysis and an action plan.

The emergency preparedness of other SAR units used in maritime rescue operations varies by unit from 24-hour to occasional readiness. The Maritime Incident Response Groups (MIRG) and medical services are on 24-hour readiness.

The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre and sub-centres maintain real-time resource monitoring of the emergency preparedness and action plans of the SAR units. For each maritime rescue mission, the most suitable unit is used which is normally the one that is quickest to arrive on the scene and capable of performing the planned duties.

	Boats	Vessels	SAR helicopter	Surveillance aircrafts	Special groups
The Border Guard	X*	X*	X*	X**	X
The Police	X ***				
The Rescue Service	X ***				X
The Defence Forces	(X)	X	(X)	(X)	X
Voluntary maritime rescue	X ***				
Other potential actors:					
- Arctic Shipping		X****			
- Finpilot	X				

* = on-call 24 h / day

** = not in continuous readiness

*** = readiness mainly during the open-water season

**** = e.g. ice-breakers and buoy tender vessels



4.1.4 Communications Plan

The Finnish Border Guard is responsible for radio communications in distress situations and for maintaining the related emergency preparedness. Radio communications in distress situations comprise the monitoring of emergency frequencies and traffic, answering distress alarms and calls, alerting the SAR units, and co-ordinating the radio traffic during the SAR operation. The MRCC or MRSC instructs the use of available frequencies relating to the accident as precisely as possible and gives orders pertaining to communications traffic. When assigned to a mission, a rescue unit is always provided with details on the effective lines of command and the communications network used.

The international distress and safety call frequencies monitored at the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre or sub-centre are:

- VHF-DSC channel 70 (156.525 MHz)
- VHF channel 16 (156.800 MHz)
- MF-DSC channel 2187.5 kHz

The aircraft emergency frequency is 121.5 MHz. The frequency used for co-operation with air search and rescue services in a distress situation is 123.1 MHz.

Radio Traffic in a Maritime Search and Rescue Mission

Communications connections between on-shore operating facilities are mainly implemented as telephone and telefax connections. The off-shore mission co-ordination is primarily implemented using the international VHF voice channels 16 and 14, through which a mission co-ordination network is established. The mission co-ordination network involves the following parties as applicable:

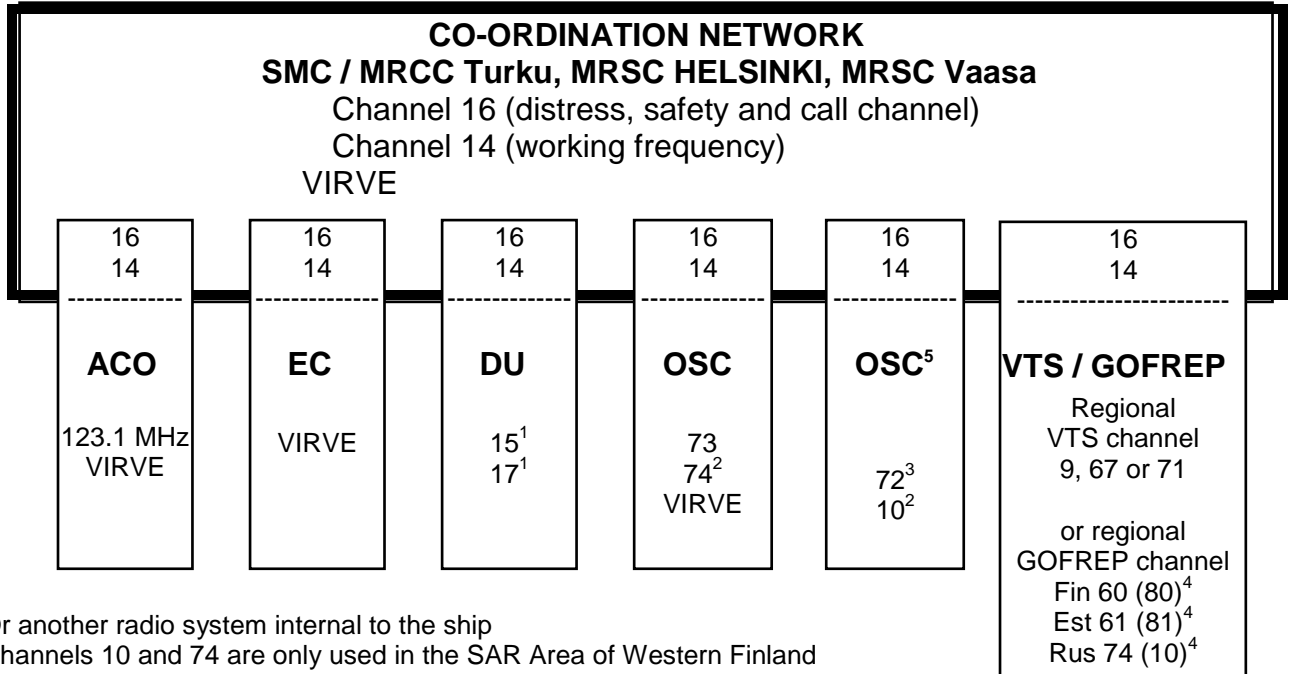
- Distress unit
- Maritime rescue co-ordination centre
- Maritime rescue sub-centre
- On-scene co-ordinator(s)
- Aircraft co-ordinator
- Evacuation centre co-ordinator

In the event that sub-coordinators are assigned to the mission, the following dedicated networks are established at their disposal:

- Distress unit: VHF channels 15 or 17
- On-scene co-ordinator: VHF channels 73, 74 or the VIRVE public authority network
- On-scene co-ordinator (surface search): VHF channel 10 or 72
- Aircraft co-ordinator: aircraft radio frequency 123.1 MHz, a maritime VHF channel separately assigned, or VIRVE
- Evacuation centre co-ordinator: VIRVE



MAJOR ACCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS CHART



¹ Or another radio system internal to the ship

² Channels 10 and 74 are only used in the SAR Area of Western Finland

³ Channel 72 is only used in the SAR area of the Gulf of Finland (east of the City of Hanko)

⁴ GOFREP standby channels

⁵ On-scene co-ordinator responsible for surface search

Abbreviations used in the table

SMC	= SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION CO-ORDINATOR
DU	= DISTRESS UNIT
OSC	= ON SCENE CO-ORDINATOR
ACO	= AIRCRAFT CO-ORDINATOR
EC	= EVACUATION CENTRE
CSS	= CO-ORDINATOR OF SURFACE SEARCH
VTS	= VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE
GOFREP	= GULF OF FINLAND REPORTING SYSTEM
VIRVE	= NETWORK FOR FINNISH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

4.1.5 Planning a Search Mission

The principles outlined in the IAMSAR manual shall be complied with when planning a search mission. As a rule, the search areas are defined in the MRCC or MRSC. In addition to the search area, the vessels participating in the search mission are also notified of at least the search method to be used.

The SAR information system is used for planning the search, which also makes it possible to define drift forecasts for different items.



4.1.6 Medical Consultation and Assistance

The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre and sub-centres are responsible for forwarding the requests for Telemedical Maritime Assistance Service (TMAS) to the on-call doctor as agreed between the relevant national authorities. The Finnish Border Guard provides ships with a forwarding service for medical consultation requests through the MRCC or MRSC.

The social and health authorities are responsible for ensuring the availability of medical rescue services on shore and attending to the psycho-social care of the rescued people when required. In a rescue mission, the activities are co-ordinated to ensure sufficient medical and psycho-social support. The co-operation relating to the afore-mentioned operations are described in more detail in the SAR plan of each respective SAR area.

4.1.7 Fire Protection and Fire Fighting, Chemical Hazards, Other Hazards

The Finnish SAR services are responsible for the assistance given to off-shore ships (including fire fighting and hazardous materials diving assistance). For these duties, the Finnish Border Guard primarily uses rescue department personnel with special training, collectively referred to as the MIRG (Maritime Incident Response Group).

The captain of the ship is responsible for all on-board rescue operations as well as for the evacuation of the people on the ship. If required, the Finnish SAR services shall support the captain by providing additional resources at the ship's disposal. The Finnish SAR services are responsible for any rescue and evacuation operations outside the ship.

In the event of a fire or chemical accident, an expert in rescue services is requested to join the MRCC or MRSC to assist the captain of the distressed ship and the SMC if the situation so requires.

The **environmental authorities** are responsible for arranging the prevention of ship oil and chemical damage in connection with maritime accidents in co-operation with other authorities as provided under the Act on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships or the Act on Prevention of Oil Damage. They also provide their special expertise in the field at the disposal of the Finnish Border Guard.

4.1.8 Shore Reception Arrangements and Evacuation Centres

In major and multi-type accidents, people are transported from the accident scene to an evacuation centre. The evacuation centre is located in the vicinity of the accident site in a location to which the evacuated can be transported by ship or helicopter and from which there are good onward connections by land. Based on a risk analysis, the setting up of evacuation centres in locations such as harbours and airports is proactively accommodated in the SAR plan. The location of the evacuation centre is determined by



the SMC based on the prerequisites created by the Steering Group of the SAR area. The evacuation centre is set up by the SAR authorities.

The evacuation centre must have a sufficient amount of warm areas. If required, the evacuation centre can be set up using portable tents and field medical supplies. The police shall record the personal data of the people who arrive at the evacuation centre. The preconditions for first aid and patient classification must be established in the evacuation centre. Its location must be selected so that the distance from the accident scene is as short as possible and that it has functional onward connections to hospital care. The necessary crisis help shall be arranged in the evacuation centre. Communications fall under the responsibility of the authority in charge of the operations. In co-operation with volunteers, the police shall arrange a telephone service that can be contacted by the victims' next-of-kin. The captain of the distressed ship, the OSC and the co-ordinator of the evacuation centre must ensure that the exact number of evacuated people is known and notified to the SMC.

4.1.9 Informing Next-of-kin

In the event of an accident, the police are responsible for informing the next-of-kin of those involved in the accident and for publishing their personal details.

4.1.10 Suspension or Termination of SAR actions

The decision to terminate a search, assistance or rescue action rests with the SMC.

- 1) The SMC terminates the SAR or assistance operation when all people have been saved and are no longer in imminent danger.
- 2) If all of the people have not been found or rescued, efforts will continue as long as there remains reasonable hope of finding or rescuing them.

If required, the SMC shall discuss the termination of the mission with the other parties involved. If justified for reasons such as extremely bad weather, the SAR measures may be suspended for a fixed period of time after which they will be continued in accordance with the decision made.

The reasons for the termination or suspension of the mission shall be entered in the SAR information system. In addition to the actions performed, the description and outcome of the incident shall also be entered in the system.



Part 5 Media Communications in a SAR Situation

In its capacity as the leader of the SAR mission, the Finnish Coast Guard is also responsible for co-ordinating the communications relating to the mission. Depending on the extent of the accident, the Coast Guard may be assisted by the Headquarters of the Border Guard and the communications personnel of the Ministry of the Interior.

In conventional SAR situations, communications shall be taken care of by the SMC who is based in the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre or sub-centre. Information about SAR situations shall also be disseminated by e-mail and fax and on the web site of the Finnish Border Guard at www.raja.fi. Depending on the severity of the situation, the authority in charge shall also inform the management and communications unit of its own organisation, which shall then forward the information to the Government.

Efforts shall be made to give the first press release within 30 minutes of the incident. The first release shall contain the following information:

- What has happened
- Where the incident took place
- When the incident took place
- What measures have been taken

In the event of a severe accident, a press conference may be arranged. The authority in charge shall decide on the parties invited to the press conference and the contents thereof. When it is sure that all parties have been contacted, the media shall be notified of the time and place of the press conference. The objective is to arrange the press conference as soon as possible after the incident while taking the time of the day into account. Supplementary releases on the incident and on the progress of the rescue operations may be given prior to the press conference.

The representatives of the authorities and the ship-owner shall be present at the press conference. The authorities shall explain the actions taken by them, while the ship-owner shall explain matters pertaining to the ship and its crew. Only reliable information shall be disseminated at the conference; the potential causes shall not be assessed. Due consideration must be given to matters that are to be kept secret, such as the identity of the victims and any aspects relating to criminal investigations. The time and place of the next press conference shall also be notified. Subsequent press conferences shall be arranged at regular intervals. Crisis communications aim at centralised communications that enable equal treatment of the media. This means that the parties involved should not give any additional statements to the media between the press conferences. Efforts shall be made to answer any enquiries from the next-of-kin as accurately as possible.

Any transport of media representatives to the accident scene shall be decided by the authority in charge of the rescue operations. If reporters are also to be taken to the distressed ship, this must be agreed beforehand with captain of the ship.



Part 6 Periodic Exercises

The number, form and training content of the exercises shall be considered jointly by the ship, the ship-owner and the SAR services according to the then-current needs. The exercises shall be arranged once a year. The ship-owner is obliged to actively contribute to the exercise arrangements.

The purpose of the exercises is to make the SAR services better known by ships and ship-owners, and to co-ordinate the actions of the ship-owner, the ship and the MRCC or MRSC in the event of accidents.

The exercises are divided into co-ordination, map and communications exercises and contact requests testing the degree of emergency preparedness. The exercises shall primarily take place outside of the summer season (between September and April). The following preparation times should be taken into account when planning the exercises:

- Live SAR exercises: 3 three to six months.
- Exercises between ships: 3 three weeks
- Info updates targeted at companies and ships: one month
- Connection tests and preparedness enquiries can be practised as applicable

The exercises may be connected to the inspection of ISM functions. Co-operation exercises between a passenger ship and patrol vessels must be arranged at least once a year. These co-operation exercises may also be included as part of co-ordination exercises or seminars. Connection tests and preparedness enquiries shall be practised on a monthly basis. If a ship participates in an actual SAR mission, this can, on a case-by-case basis, be regarded as a substitute for a period exercise.

A ship-owner shall acquaint him/herself with the SAR system and be prepared to participate in the work of the SAR Steering Group and comply with the unified communications policy.