



Integrated Offshore Emergency Response (IOER)

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Introductory Notes

EPOL is the acronym for the Emergency Preparedness Offshore Liaison Group which was formed in 1995 in the aftermath of the Piper Alpha disaster in July 1988, the subsequent Public Enquiry and the introduction of the Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response Regulations 1995. The Group was established to look at all aspects of offshore oil and gas industry emergency response where there was a risk to life.

EPOL is an industry led body facilitated by Police Scotland. HM Coastguard is a permanent member of the Group. EPOL has spawned a number of sub-groups which cover aspects of emergency response in greater detail – Human Resources, Mutual Aid, Media issues etc.

The Offshore Emergency Response Working Group (OERWG) was established under the umbrella of EPOL in 2009 following two major offshore helicopter incidents in the Central North Sea¹. The OERWG is a unique grouping that brings together the emergency services, regulators, and a cross section of the offshore oil and gas industry including Commercial Air Transport² (CAT) helicopter operators to review offshore Search and Rescue (SAR) procedures. The OERWG's terms of reference are contained in of this document.

Procedures and guidance contained in this document have been determined by the OERWG membership. It is intended that the document will be dynamic and capable of regular refresh to reflect periodic changes to the structure of participating organisations. Procedural and guidance changes will only take place following consultation with the OERWG and wider industry. Although this document covers aviation issues in general terms, detailed technical aspects of aviation SAR response should be consulted in other documents including the International Aeronautical and Maritime SAR (IAMSAR) Manual Volume II.

The document intends to explain the concept of Integrated Offshore Emergency Response to a wide range of agencies, authorities and to the broader offshore oil and gas industry including CAT helicopter and vessel owners or operators. In order to keep the document as brief and concise as possible, the explanation of roles and responsibilities of some of the agencies is limited to how they fit into the overall response to offshore oil and gas industry incidents.

Detailed guidance on the onshore aspect of offshore emergency response is available elsewhere on the EPOL website³. This document focuses primarily on the offshore (i.e. at sea) aspect of oil and gas incidents.

Flowcharts are included in the appendices of this document to further improve understanding of IOER principles.

¹ G-REDU 18 February 2009 18 persons rescued no fatalities & G-REDL 1 April 2009 16 fatalities no survivors.

² For the purposes of this document, "Commercial Air Transport (CAT) helicopter" is intended to cover helicopters engaged in the routine transportation of the offshore workforce to and from their place of work.

³ EPOL Website – www.epolgroup.co.uk

Offshore Emergency Response Working Group

HM Coastguard – Offshore Energy Lead
Maritime and Coastguard Agency - Aviation
Police Scotland – Energy Industry Liaison Unit
NATS – Aberdeen Air Traffic Services Unit
CAA – Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
HSE – Energy Division
Bristow SAR
Industry SAR
OHS SAR
OffshoreEnergies UK (OEUK)
Emergency Response and Rescue Vessel Association (ERRVA)
Offshore operator representatives
Subsea operator representatives
IMCA/IOGP Diving Subcommittee
Offshore helicopter operators

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1 Scope, Background and Requirement

1.1 Scope

- 1.1.1 Procedures and guidance contained within this document are intended to cover the Search and Rescue (SAR) emergency response to an offshore oil and gas industry incident throughout the UK Search & Rescue Region (UK SRR). It should be noted that the United Kingdom Continental Shelf (UKCS), as defined for oil and gas exploration, largely sits within the UK SRR. To the North and West of Shetland, however, there are areas where the two boundaries are at variance and bespoke emergency response procedures may be required.
- 1.1.2 In major offshore oil and gas industry incidents there will almost certainly be an element of overlap between the SAR emergency response and hydrocarbon containment or pollution control emergency response. This document, however, focuses solely on the SAR interface between the industry response and that provided by the emergency services. It should be noted that, although hydrocarbon containment or pollution control emergency response may run concurrent with SAR emergency response, SAR operations will always have primacy.
- 1.1.3 Although this document focuses on the at-sea emergency response, as survivors, evacuees or casualties are brought onshore, responsibilities move to the police and other emergency services working closely with the operating companies involved. The document will outline how these responsibilities interact within the concept of Integrated Offshore Emergency Response (IOER).
- 1.1.4 Although the IOER document attempts to provide a one size fits all solution, the geographic location of the incident may require or necessitate a tailored response however the principles behind IOER should remain.
- 1.1.5 The '[Strategic Overview of SAR in the UK](#)' document describes the model for the organisation and communications infrastructure of SAR co-ordinators and SAR units.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 Offshore oil and gas incidents can be highly complex, and emergency response is likely to involve a wide range of authorities and assets, with the industry in the UK SRR being able to call upon its own rescue vessels or SAR helicopter(s). In addition, they will have an onshore emergency response structure to support the Offshore Installation Manager (OIM)/Master. In certain circumstances⁴, the onshore emergency response structure can also call upon Commercial Air Transport (CAT) helicopters to support an evacuation. Industry onshore emergency response works closely with the police to receive and process evacuees when they are brought onshore. This is of major benefit to SAR coordinators who can then focus their effort on the at-sea response.
- 1.2.2 In a major offshore incident, it is inevitable that national SAR assets are likely to be deployed and nearby vessels not directly linked to the offshore installation in difficulty will respond under international obligations. In certain circumstances, CAT helicopters may also form part of the overall emergency response.

⁴ Discussed in detail in Chapter 9

1.3 Requirement

- 1.3.1 Terminology must be clear and unambiguous and understood by all participants. SAR terminology is based on the IAMSAR⁵ Manual and will be familiar to all vessels and aircraft responding to the incident, including assets responding from states adjacent to the UK SRR. This document uses IAMSAR terminology and procedures but attempts to put them into the context of an offshore oil and gas incident and to interface them with industry terminology.
- 1.3.2 IAMSAR defines three Emergency Phases. Each and every SAR incident must be categorised into one of the three Emergency Phases. This will define the operating environment for those at risk and those responding.
- 1.3.3 A communication and coordination plan to safely manage the multiple aircraft response should form part of the wider IOER Plan.

2 PFEER, Industry Response and Capability

2.1 PFEER

- 2.1.1 Responsibility for the regulation of health and safety for the offshore oil and gas industry lies with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Energy Division.
- 2.1.2 A key part of HSE legislation is The Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995⁶ – commonly abbreviated to PFEER.
- 2.1.3 In broad terms, the PFEER Regulations require the duty holder to have in place the organisation and procedures to deal with an emergency and any subsequent evacuation, escape or rescue. This document summarises some of the key elements of PFEER with a view to explaining how PFEER interacts with the concept of Integrated Offshore Emergency Response and is not, in any way, intended to replace the full Statutory Instrument.
- 2.1.4 “Duty Holder” means
 - a) in relation to a production installation, the operator
 - b) in relation to a non production installation, the owner“Owner” means
The person or company who controls the operation of a non production installation⁷
- 2.1.5 “Emergency” means an emergency of a kind which can require evacuation, escape or rescue.

⁵ IAMSAR – International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue. The acronym given to the manual jointly produced by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). IMO and ICAO are specialised agencies of the United Nations. Emergency phases are fully explained in 8.2.3.

⁶ Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 743. The Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995

⁷ PFEER definitions of Duty Holder and Owner as amended by SCR15. For the purposes of this document and ease of reading the term Duty Holder will be used throughout when referring to the onshore organisation responsible for providing support in life-saving emergency response to the OIM.

- 2.1.6 “Evacuation” means the leaving of an installation and its vicinity, in an emergency, in a systematic manner and without directly entering the sea⁸. The PFEER Approved Code of Practice explains that the preferred method of evacuation should be the normal means of getting people to and from the installation – on the UKCS this is normally by helicopter or walk to work. Alternative means of evacuation should be provided in the foreseeable circumstances that the preferred means is not available because of the nature of the incident, weather or environmental conditions, or because of insufficient time or capacity. In most cases the alternative means would be evacuation by sea using TEMPSC⁹.
- 2.1.7 “Escape” is not defined in the PFEER Regulations but **Regulation 16. Means of Escape** states “The Duty Holder shall provide such means as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safe escape of all persons from the installation in case arrangements for evacuation fail”.
- 2.1.8 In the accompanying Approved Code of Practice and guidance to PFEER, under guidance, “escape” means the process of leaving the installation in an emergency when the evacuation system has failed; it may involve entering the sea directly and is a “last resort” method of getting persons off the installation.
- 2.1.9 PFEER Regulation 17. Arrangements for Recovery and Rescue states
- The Duty Holder shall ensure that effective arrangements are made, which includes such arrangements with suitable persons beyond the installation, for:
- a) recovery of persons following their evacuation or escape from the installation; and
 - b) rescue of persons near the installation; and
 - c) taking such persons to a place of safety,

and for the purposes of this regulation, arrangements shall be regarded as being effective if they secure a good prospect of those persons being recovered, rescued and taken to a place of safety.

2.2 Industry Response and Capability

- 2.2.1 As outlined in 1.2, the offshore oil and gas industry in the UK SRR has an emergency response capability offshore with significant onshore support and backup.
- 2.2.2 Offshore capability is normally manifested by the provision of an Emergency Response and Rescue Vessel (ERRV) fitted with fast rescue and/or daughter craft. Under PFEER, the parent ERRV would be considered as a place of safety. An ERRV may cover one or more installations subject to HSE Energy Division approval.
- 2.2.3 The Duty Holder will provide back up and support to the OIM from the Duty Holder’s onshore premises or through third party facilities. The onshore Emergency Response Room¹⁰ will provide support to the OIM in the event of an emergency including, but not limited to:
- Technical support and advice

⁸ Terminology such as “downmanning” whether temporary, partial, controlled or precautionary is poorly defined and interpretation varies throughout industry. This term should not be used during an emergency. This is expanded further in 8.9.

⁹ TEMPSC – [Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft](#) – the installation lifeboat(s) which may be davit launched or freefall

¹⁰ There is no industry standard – it can be Emergency Control Room (ECR), Emergency Response Room (ERR), Emergency Response Centre (ERC) etc.

- Logistics – vessels and helicopters
- Human Resources – interface with police for reception of evacuees
- Media response.

3 National Search and Rescue Responsibility and Capability

3.1 HM Coastguard

- 3.1.1 HM Coastguard is the uniformed branch of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT). HM Coastguard is the responsible authority for the initiation and coordination of civil SAR within the UK SRR¹¹.
- 3.1.2 For the purposes of this document, incidents which happen at, on or near offshore installations which require a search and/or rescue response fall into the category of civil maritime incidents.
- 3.1.3 HM Coastguard carries out its coordination role through a network of Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCC) and the United Kingdom's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC UK).
- 3.1.4 HM Coastguard has divided the UK SRR in to 36 maritime operational zones, which will be allocated to each MRCC depending on demand and workload.
- 3.1.5 MRCCs are fitted with extensive radio and telecommunications equipment and are capable of providing a 24-hour immediate SAR response using declared and additional facilities.
- 3.1.6 In the context of this document, declared facilities are those which have been designated as being available for civil maritime SAR according to a specific standard or set of criteria e.g. RNLI lifeboats and HM Coastguard SAR helicopters¹².
- 3.1.7 Additional facilities are those which may be available from time to time but not to any specific standard e.g. vessels at sea responding under international obligations.¹³ In the context of this document, additional facilities will include offshore installations providing support (refuelling or reception of evacuees/survivors) and associated offshore support vessels such as ERRVs etc. Oil and gas industry funded SAR helicopters such as the Aberdeen based aircraft and those offshore on the Norwegian Continental Shelf are considered to be additional facilities. CAT helicopters may form part of the overall emergency response and they are also classed as additional facilities.

3.2 Joint Rescue Coordination Centre – Aeronautical Rescue

- 3.2.1 The JRCC Aeronautical rescue (JRCC AR) is responsible for civil aeronautical SAR throughout the UK SRR.
- 3.2.2 JRCC AR is the sole tasking authority for all national SAR aircraft and is also responsible for processing requests for assistance from other SAR helicopters such as Industry SAR, Norwegian offshore or from neighbouring states.

¹¹ International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974.

International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue 1979.

¹² While SAR helicopters are not to be factored into any installation safety case, they will most likely, alongside CAT aircraft, be the preferred response to an offshore emergency, notwithstanding the availability of other evacuation and escape methods e.g. TEMPSC as required.

¹³ Convention on the High Seas 1958 Article 12

- 3.2.3 JRCC AR is fitted with extensive radio and telecommunications equipment and is capable of providing a 24-hour immediate SAR response.

3.3 Coordination of Oil and Gas Aviation Incidents

- 3.3.1 Following two significant helicopter incidents in the 1990s¹⁴, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) recommended that, although the SAR response in both incidents had been satisfactory, there needed to be a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities in the event of an aircraft ditching or crashing into the sea.
- 3.3.2 A Memorandum of Understanding between the then Department of Transport and Ministry of Defence was signed on 3rd March 1997 in order to clarify roles and responsibilities and although the MoU no longer exists, the principles detailed in 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 are extant.
- 3.3.3 If an aircraft declares a distress situation and continued flight is viable, the JRCC AR has clear responsibility as outlined in 3.2.1.
- 3.3.4 If the aircraft ditches on the sea, the authority (JRCC AR or MRCC) receiving the initial notification will assume responsibility for coordinating the response and will receive full support from the other. At the earliest opportunity, discussion will then ensue in order to determine which authority is best placed to coordinate the overall response. Given that the SAR response will almost certainly include vessels as well as SAR helicopters, it is likely that the MRCC will take responsibility and be fully supported by the JRCC AR.
- 3.3.5 Aviation incidents that happen at or near offshore oil and gas installations are covered by the PFEER regulations and will be treated by the MRCC as an installation incident and will be coordinated by the MRCC as outlined in 3.1.2.

3.4 Police

- 3.4.1 On the UK mainland, the police are the authority responsible for land-based SAR. The police role in offshore oil and gas industry incidents is explained in detail in Chapter 4

3.5 RNLI

- 3.5.1 The RNLI is a completely independent charitable organisation that provides a 24-hour lifeboat service around the coasts of the British Isles.
- 3.5.2 In the context of this document, the RNLI operate a fleet of All Weather Lifeboats which are declared facilities. RNLI assistance is normally requested through HM Coastguard MRCCs who will then coordinate the lifeboat in response to an incident although operational control of RNLI lifeboats remains at all times with the RNLI.
- 3.5.3 Use of RNLI lifeboats in offshore oil and gas incidents will depend primarily on incident location i.e. more likely in the East Irish Sea, Southern North Sea or in the event of a CAT helicopter servicing the oil and gas industry ditching or crashing on the sea near to land.

¹⁴ G-TIGH near to Cormorant Alpha 14.03.92 & G-TIGK in Brae Field 19.01.1995

4 Police

4.1 Police

- 4.1.1 One of the main police functions is to protect life and property. The role of the police and their responsibilities in relation to offshore emergencies (oil and gas installations and associated activities) are set out below.

4.2 Jurisdiction

- 4.2.1 Legislation provides that the police have criminal jurisdiction for oil and gas installations within the UKCS. For all installations in the UK sector of the Northern and Central North Sea (north of 55° 50'N) and West of Shetland, policing responsibilities lie with Police Scotland. For incidents occurring out with this area, companies should liaise with the appropriate police services in England and Wales. These include:
- Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary
 - Lincolnshire Constabulary
 - Humberside Police
 - Lancashire Constabulary
 - North Wales Police
 - Merseyside Police
 - Cumbria Constabulary
- 4.2.2 For offshore installations which are located within UK territorial waters, the police service with littoral responsibility has jurisdiction.
- 4.2.3 A map highlighting the various policing boundaries in England and Wales is contained in

Appendix B.

4.3 Police Response to a Major Offshore Incident

- 4.3.1 Unlike land-based emergencies in which the police will coordinate the response of the other emergency services, offshore search and/or rescue operations will be led by HM Coastguard. HM Coastguard will also be responsible for notifying hospitals and ambulances when injured persons are to be brought ashore.
- 4.3.2 Actions the police would initially take in the event of an offshore emergency **may** include the following:
- Activate relevant contingency plans.
 - Establish police command and control structures.
 - Instigate an investigation if required.
 - Send an Incident Liaison Officer (ILO) to the coordinating HM Coastguard MRCC.
 - Send an ILO to companies involved to liaise with their emergency response teams.
 - Liaise with other agencies as appropriate.
 - Obtain details of persons onboard.
 - Coordination of the shore-based response to an offshore maritime emergency.
 - Establish a casualty bureau and issue an emergency telephone number to the media for relatives' enquiries.
 - Attend at hospitals, reception centres, mortuaries, heliports or disembarkation points in order to document all persons taken ashore from the incident.
 - Advise next of kin. Where fatalities are involved, this will be done by a personal visit from the police whenever possible. In the case of injured personnel, the scale of the incident and more importantly the extent of the injury will dictate if next of kin are advised in person by the police.
 - Establish a media briefing centre at a suitable location.
 - Deploy offshore-trained police onto the installation/vessel if required and when safe to do so, to investigate and gather evidence.

4.4 Police Notification

- 4.4.1 It is difficult to be prescriptive regarding when the police should be notified. It is beneficial that the police are given early notification for the following reasons:
- The requirement placed on the police to protect life and property.
 - Delay could have serious consequences to the overall response, the investigation and identification of victims.
 - Media will quickly become aware of an oil and gas incident and early notification gives the police the opportunity to coordinate a joint, accurate and appropriate response.
 - The incident may escalate and ultimately require a greater response.
- 4.4.2 The following sections detail examples of when the police **will** be involved, **may** be involved and when they should be notified for **information only**.
- 4.4.3 Police must be contacted and **will** be deployed to any incident where there is severe injury or death, or any emergency where there is a significant ongoing risk of this, including:

- Person overboard / missing person.
- Terrorist incident.
- Sudden and unexplained deaths.
- Unauthorised boarding of an installation by protestors.

4.4.4 Other incident types of which the police should be notified, and **may** be deployed, depending on whether there is severe injury, death or ongoing risk of this, could include:

- Fire.
- Explosion.
- Blow-out.
- Collision.
- Diving accident.
- Helicopter incident / accident.
- Serious injury.
- Gas leak.
- Structural failure.
- Vessel accident.
- Emergency medical evacuation.
- Installation abandonment.
- Evacuation to shore or receptor platform.
- Bomb threat

4.4.5 Incidents for which the police should be notified **for information**:

- Significant oil pollution.
- Pipeline incidents.
- Safety zone infringements.
- Suspicious activity and hostile reconnaissance.

4.4.6 Police will also deal with anything criminal occurring offshore within their jurisdiction - e.g. thefts, assaults, possession of illicit substances, criminal possession/use of firearms - but such crimes will not be treated as emergencies unless there is an ongoing/imminent risk to life. Police will not normally deploy offshore to deal with these, but will await relevant suspects/witnesses/evidence being conveyed to shore.

5 Aberdeen Air Traffic Services Unit

5.1 Aberdeen Air Traffic Services Unit

5.1.1 Aberdeen Air Traffic Services Unit (ATSU), based at Aberdeen Airport, provides air traffic services to helicopters working with the offshore oil and gas industry in the Northern, Central and Southern North Sea and in the West of Shetland area (see Figure 1 below). Working daily with the CAT helicopters that service the UK offshore oil and gas industry, Aberdeen ATSU has an unrivalled expertise and knowledge of offshore helicopter operations. Aberdeen ATSU forms an integral part of the overall SAR response to any major offshore oil and gas industry incident throughout the North Sea and areas to the West of Shetland. This includes the East Shetland Basin; although it sits within Norwegian airspace, responsibility for the provision of Air Traffic Services within this area is delegated to the UK. Aberdeen ATSU will also have a significant role to play in any major maritime incident (e.g. ferry incident, large passenger vessel incident, major search

etc.) should that incident take place within those areas of the North Sea in which the offshore oil and gas industry, or helicopters servicing the industry, are likely to be involved.

- 5.1.2 Between the hours of 2200 and 0630 (local), services in the offshore sectors are limited to contingency or emergency cover only, on a callout basis. Agencies authorised to initiate a callout include D&D¹⁵ and HM Coastguard. Aberdeen ATSU has radio telephony (R/T) and radar coverage in the majority of the North Sea from a combination of land and offshore based radars and R/T sites. In a significant part of the North Sea, however, there is no land-based radar coverage and surveillance of aircraft is provided by a system called Wide Area Multilateration (WAM) and ADS-B system¹⁶. WAM/ADS-B sensors receive information from an aircraft's transponder and then present the aircraft's position to the controller in a format much like secondary radar although the technology is very different.
- 5.1.3 Given the combination of land and offshore based helicopters, WAM/ADS-B and R/T sites, it is likely that Aberdeen ATSU will be among the first to know of any incident involving CAT helicopters en-route to or from an offshore installation. For incidents involving offshore installations, Aberdeen ATSU will normally be able to provide HM Coastguard with information on CAT helicopter activity in the area. They should be able to provide details of the aircraft, souls on board and helicopter operating company.
- 5.1.4 Although Aberdeen ATSU will be able to assist the SAR authorities with vital information in the early stages of an offshore incident, their task is to ensure the safety of aircraft and helicopters operating in the offshore areas and they are therefore unable to fulfil the role of aircraft coordinator and they must not be asked to do so.

¹⁵ D&D – Distress and Diversion, run by the RAF, providing emergency and location fixing service for aviators

¹⁶ Automatic Dependant Surveillance-Broadcast – surveillance technology allowing an aircraft to be tracked by its satellite determined position

- 5.1.5 In the event of an offshore emergency, Aberdeen ATSU may initially coordinate directly with HM Coastguard and D&D. Once it has been determined who the coordinating authority will be for the incident, Aberdeen ATSU will liaise directly with that agency. Coordination will be through the Aberdeen ATSU Watch Manager who should be the single point of contact for all requests. Queries from agencies other than HM Coastguard should be directed towards the coordinating authority for the incident and not to Aberdeen ATSU to ensure that lines of communication do not get tangled and information is not lost.

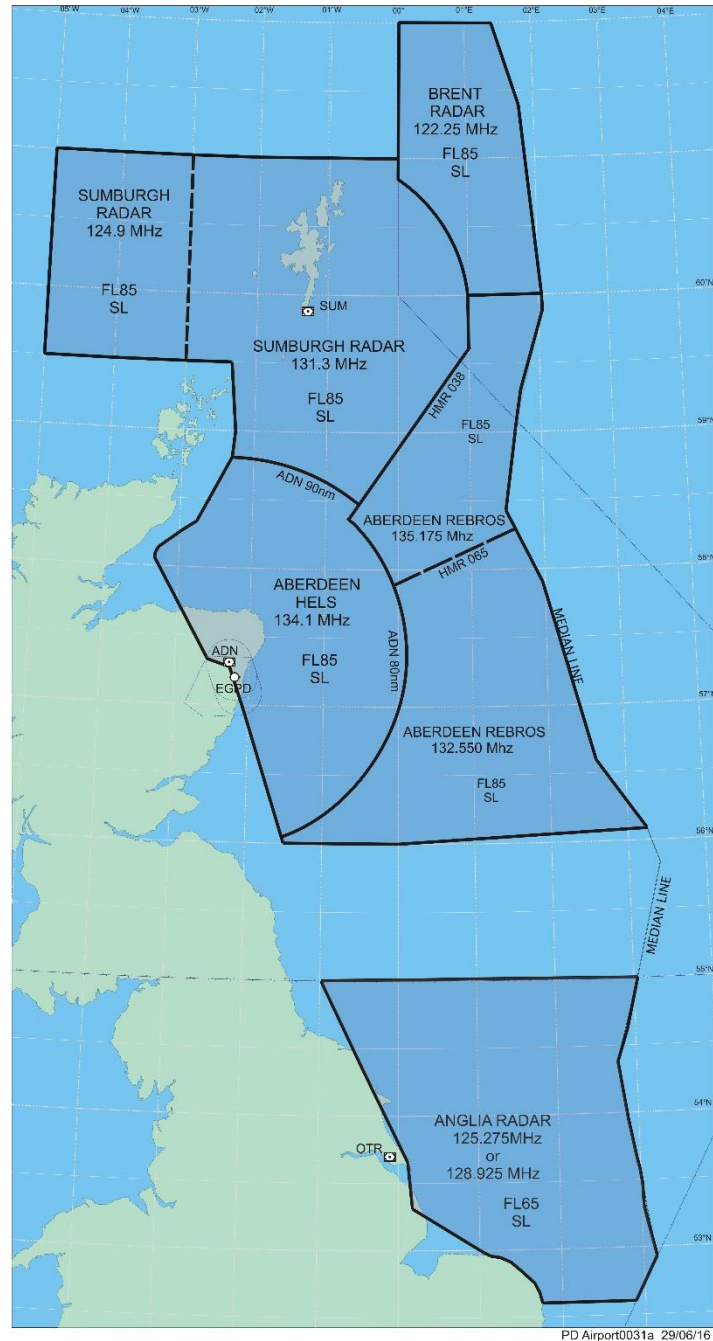


Figure 1 - Aberdeen ATSU Areas of Responsibility

6 Well Control and Pollution Response

6.1 Well Control and Pollution Response

- 6.1.1 It is out with the scope of this document to cover well control and pollution response although it is recognised that in industry terminology such incidents will also require “Emergency Response”.
- 6.1.2 Detailed procedures covering how national agencies interact with the oil and gas industry in such incidents are laid out in the [National Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations \(NCP\)](#).
- 6.1.3 Nevertheless, it is accepted that in certain types of offshore oil and gas industry incidents, Search and/or Rescue operations and counter pollution operations may have to run concurrently although it is recognised that SAR or lifesaving will always take priority.

6.2 Secretary of State’s Representative (SOSREP)

- 6.2.1 Full details of the role and responsibility of the Secretary of State’s Representative are outlined in the NCP, including details of the Powers of Intervention and maritime temporary exclusion zones.
- 6.2.2 Supporting documents are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-contingency-plan>

7 Industry, National SAR and Police Interface

7.1 IOER Principles

- 7.1.1 Nothing contained in IOER is intended to remove the duty holders’ responsibility to comply with the requirements of PFEER.
- 7.1.2 If, however, during an oil and gas industry incident, national assistance is requested by the OIM and a Distress or Alert situation is declared, national SAR assets or vessels responding under SOLAS will inevitably find themselves operating alongside assets provided by the duty holder fulfilling their obligations under PFEER.
- 7.1.3 It is clearly essential, in the overriding interests of the safety of all concerned, that an integrated emergency response with clear lines of responsibility is established at the outset.
- 7.1.4 For all offshore oil and gas related incidents which meet the statement outlined in 7.1.2, HM Coastguard will coordinate the overall SAR response.
- 7.1.5 The OIM retains overall responsibility for dealing with events on the installation.
- 7.1.6 The duty holder, through their ERR, will continue to support the OIM in all areas. If logistic support, particularly CAT helicopters, is being considered it is critical that close dialogue takes place with the HM Coastguard MRCC before these aircraft are despatched.
- 7.1.7 In all offshore oil and gas incidents which require a SAR response, the police also have a critical role. Early notification of the incident to the appropriate service by HM Coastguard and by the duty holder is essential.

- 7.1.8 In the event of a major land-based incident, the police normally provide overall coordination of the emergency services and other responding agencies. In offshore oil and gas incidents, however, HM Coastguard are responsible for the at sea coordination while the police will concentrate upon the coordination of the onshore response.
- 7.1.9 Upon completion of the SAR response, i.e. when everyone has been accounted for or when there is no longer any reasonable expectation of finding further survivors, a formal handover of primacy should be agreed between HM Coastguard and police ensuring a clear transition from the SAR phase to the recovery phase of the operation.
- 7.1.10 Wherever possible, the deployment of trained liaison officers to the key centres responding to the incident significantly enhances communication and inter-agency response.

IOER – Onshore and Offshore Response

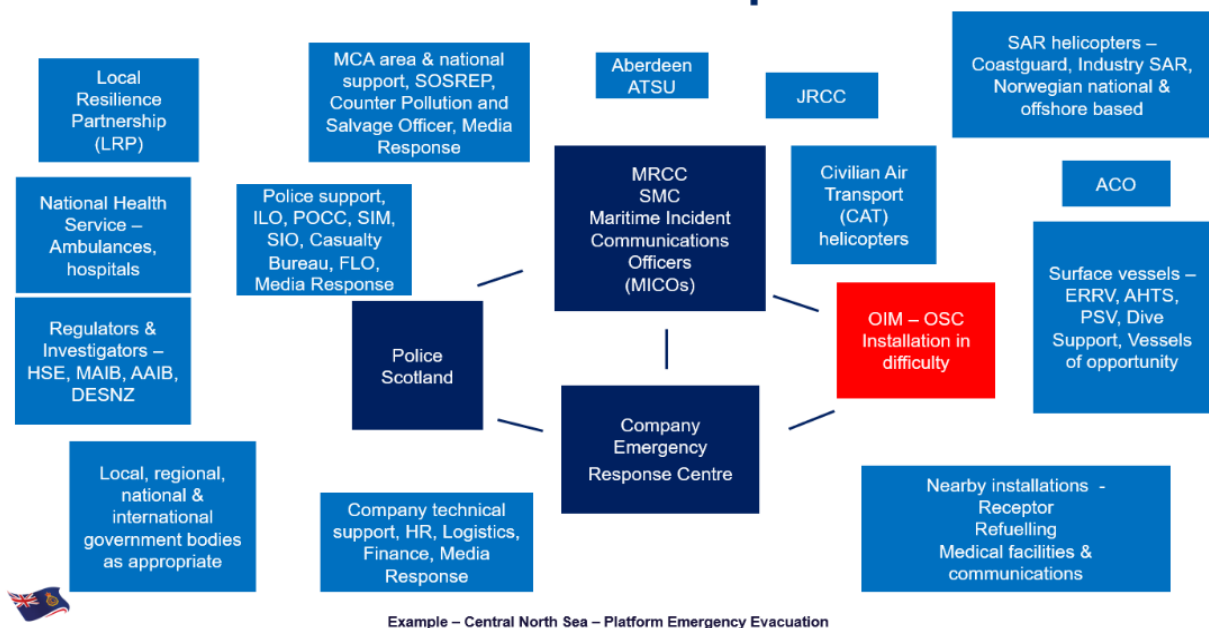


Figure 2 - Integrated Offshore Emergency Response based on a Central North Sea Offshore Installation Incident demonstrates the complexity of an offshore major incident.

- 7.1.11 It is a fundamental concept of Integrated Offshore Emergency Response that no single agency or authority will be capable of dealing with all aspects of IOER.
- 7.2 Major Incident**
- 7.2.1 The term Major Incident is commonly used by emergency services personnel to describe events or situations which would constitute an emergency as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- 7.2.2 Examples for major incidents used by the land-based emergency services include –
- Initial treatment, rescue and transport of a large number of casualties.
 - Involvement either directly or indirectly of large numbers of people.
 - Handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated both from the public and news media.
 - Need for the large-scale combined resources of two or more of the emergency services.

- Mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and supporting organisations, e.g. the local authority, to cater for the threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.
- Any occurrence which presents a serious threat to the health of the community, disruption to the service, or causes (or is likely to cause) such numbers or types of casualties as to require special arrangements to be implemented by hospitals, ambulance services or health authorities.

7.2.3 Emergency Service organisations may have their own definition of Major Incident, but most are aligned closely to that given under JESIP¹⁷, which defines a major incident as “an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one (or more) emergency responder agency”. Incidents involving any combination of the above criteria may require the declaration of a major incident. In the context of this document, this may include –

- Rescue of a large number of persons from an offshore installation
- Rescue of a large number of persons from a vessel in distress near to offshore installations e.g. passenger vessel or ferry
- Helicopter incidents involving casualties or fatalities

7.2.4 The declaration of a Major Incident may fall upon the MCA (HM Coastguard) or one or more of the other emergency services, and/or other Category 1 responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

8 Detailed SAR Procedures and Guidance

8.1 Notification / Alerting

- 8.1.1 The need to notify HM Coastguard of an incident as early as possible cannot be overemphasised. It is essential, in order to enable the timely despatch of SAR resources, that HM Coastguard be alerted at the outset of any actual or potential incident which may represent a risk to life, limb or threat of pollution.
- 8.1.2 To ensure an accurate and effective flow of information, the **initial call** to HM Coastguard, **and all updates**, must come directly from offshore and not via the onshore ERR. In the case of normally unmanned installations, or other small satellite platforms, it may be appropriate for the notifications to HM Coastguard to be made by another platform or by the ERRV, though wherever possible, contact with the casualty platform is preferred.
- 8.1.3 A ‘nominated liaison’ should be identified to maintain communications with HM Coastguard and this person should ideally be familiar with terminology and procedures found within this document. It is accepted that the OIM will not normally contact HM Coastguard in person however for certain incidents, it may be beneficial to do so and may be requested by the MRCC.
- 8.1.4 Delays in notifying HM Coastguard may crucially affect the final outcome of an incident, and time lost at the outset cannot be recovered.
- 8.1.5 If investigations offshore subsequently reveal the situation to be not as critical as initially assessed, any positive response undertaken can be quickly and easily curtailed.

¹⁷ Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles

- 8.1.6 HM Coastguard strongly recommend that the relevant MRCC be notified immediately of any of the following -
- Whenever personnel on an installation go to muster stations.
 - All civil maritime/aeronautical incidents on or near the installation e.g. man overboard, aircraft ditching, drifting vessels etc.
 - Any other incident which may pose a threat to life, the environment or property.
- 8.1.7 When contacting HM Coastguard, include all relevant and useful information such as installation location, OIM's intentions, perceived threat to the installation, weather on scene, and numbers of persons at risk. A list of initial information requested by HM Coastguard can be found in Appendix A.
- 8.1.8 As much pertinent information as possible should be gathered prior to informing HM Coastguard however as outlined in 8.1.1, installations must not delay the initial notification and therefore further detail can be established in follow-up calls as required.
- 8.1.9 For incidents requiring an immediate response, HM Coastguard will endeavour to do so on the receipt of basic information. However, it should be noted that normally the initial call to the MRCC will likely take a number of minutes to gather the required detail enabling an appropriate assessment of a timely and balanced response.
- 8.1.10 Within the context of this section, OIM is used to identify decisions and/or requests made to and from HM Coastguard, however, as indicated in 8.1.3, the actual communication is likely to be a 'nominated liaison' rather than the OIM themselves.

8.2 IAMSAR Terminology

- 8.2.1 The rationale behind using IAMSAR terminology was laid out in sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2.
- 8.2.2 There are three key Roles in IAMSAR – Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC), On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) and Aircraft Coordinator (ACO).
- 8.2.3 IAMSAR requires each and every SAR incident to be categorised into one of three Emergency Phases. In ascending order these are the Uncertainty Phase, Alert Phase and Distress Phase.

8.3 Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator

- 8.3.1 Search and Rescue Mission Co-ordinator (SMC) – the official responsible for coordination of the response to an actual or apparent emergency situation.
- 8.3.2 Under IAMSAR, each and every incident response will come under the control of a nominated SMC. For offshore oil and gas industry incidents, this will be a designated senior uniformed officer at a MRCC.
- 8.3.3 For protracted incidents, the role may be handed over from one SMC to another. Such handover will be formally recorded.
- 8.3.4 The SMC has overall responsibility for appointing or confirming the roles of OSC and/or ACO.

8.4 On-Scene Coordinator

- 8.4.1 On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) – a person designated (i.e. by the SMC) to coordinate SAR operations within a specified area.
- 8.4.2 The role of the OSC is to carry out the SMC's action plan on-scene. The OSC normally coordinates on-scene resources, communicates the SMC's instructions and acts as a communications link between all participants. The OSC will also provide the SMC with regular situation reports (Sitreps) on the incident offshore.
- 8.4.3 The role of OSC may be assumed by the OIM of the installation with the problem. This is a long-standing arrangement designed to reflect and recognise the OIM's status under the PFEER Regulations. Where it is not possible or practical for the OIM to assume the role of OSC, alternatives have to be found in adjacent installations or nearby vessels.
- 8.4.4 Some Duty Holder procedures call upon the installation ERRV to assume the role of OSC should the situation on the installation become untenable. It should be noted that no transfer of OSC should take place without involving the SMC. In any case, and in such circumstances, the ERRV will be fully occupied in its primary rescue and recovery role. A more appropriate asset to fulfil the essentially communications-based role of OSC may be another vessel or installation in a more stand-off role. In remote locations, however, with no supporting infrastructure or adjacent installations, the ERRV may be the only option as OSC.
- 8.4.5 The role of OSC may be assumed initially. This must subsequently be verified by the SMC at the earliest opportunity and the SMC can appoint a more suitable asset if considered appropriate.
- 8.4.6 It is essential that the SMC communicate the appointment of an OSC and the identity of the OSC to all other participants in the response at the earliest opportunity. Any change to the role should be similarly broadcast to all participants.
- 8.4.7 The abbreviation OSC is frequently used within industry to mean alternative, but similar, roles including On-scene Commander, as seen in the OPEP guidelines, or Operations Section Chief. Care should be taken when using this acronym that its intended meaning is clearly identified. Where at all possible, an alternative acronym should be used to avoid confusion with IAMSAR, particularly when explaining the role the OIM has in relation to command and control onboard the installation.

8.5 Aircraft Co-ordinator

- 8.5.1 Aircraft Coordinator (ACO) – a person or team who coordinates the involvement of multiple aircraft SAR operations in support of the SMC working with the OSC.
- 8.5.2 If two or more aircraft are likely to respond to the incident, an Aircraft Coordinator will be appointed.
- 8.5.3 The primary function of the ACO is to ensure the safe management of aircraft responding to the incident. It should be noted that few aircraft have the capability to act as air traffic controllers.
- 8.5.4 Although the overall responsibility for appointing the ACO lies with the SMC, this responsibility may be delegated, following discussion, to the JRCC AR.

8.5.5 It is the responsibility of the SMC to communicate the appointment of an ACO and the identity of the ACO to all other participants in the response at the earliest opportunity. Any change to the role should be similarly broadcast to all units.

8.5.6 Further information on the broader aspects of air response and detailed technical air response procedures are contained in Chapter 9.

8.6 IAMSAR Emergency Phases

8.6.1 Evaluating, identifying and declaring the relevant emergency phase defines the operational environment for those responding to the incident. This is important for all responding assets, particularly when evaluating the level of risk they may have to expose their own personnel to against the perceived danger to those whom they seek to help. This is particularly critical when considering the possible use of CAT helicopters.

8.6.2 An Uncertainty Phase is a situation wherein **doubt** exists as to the safety of an aircraft or a marine vessel, and of the person on board. It is said to occur when there is knowledge of a situation that may need to be monitored, or to have more information gathered, but that does not require despatching of resources.

8.6.3 The Alert Phase is a situation wherein **apprehension** exists as to the safety of an aircraft or marine vessel, and of the person on board. It is said to occur when an aircraft, ship or other craft, or persons on board are having some difficulty and may need assistance but are not in immediate danger. Search and Rescue Units (SRUs) may be despatched or other SAR facilities diverted to provide assistance if it is believed that conditions might worsen or that SAR facilities might not be available or able to provide assistance if conditions did worsen at a later time. The proword associated with the Alert Phase is PAN or PAN-PAN.

8.6.4 The Distress Phase exists wherein there is reasonable certainty that a vessel or other craft, including an aircraft or a person, is threatened by **grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance**. The proword associated with the Distress Phase is MAYDAY.

8.6.5 IAMSAR Emergency Phases can be upgraded or downgraded by the master, aircraft captain or OIM, in consultation with the SMC, as the incident progresses.

8.6.6 It is the responsibility of the SMC to ensure that all participating units are kept apprised of the relevant Emergency Phase at all times.

8.7 IAMSAR in the Context of Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Incidents

8.7.1 In the context of the IOER document, an offshore installation in difficulty, whether fixed or mobile, will be treated as an “other craft” when determining the relevant IAMSAR Emergency Phase.

8.7.2 When declaring an emergency situation, the master of a vessel or captain of an aircraft will normally prefix their initial (and subsequent calls) with MAYDAY or PAN-PAN depending on the gravity of the incident.

8.7.3 HM Coastguard recognise that, particularly for fixed offshore installations, OIMs may not be entirely conversant with IAMSAR and the MRCC will seek to quantify and establish the relevant IAMSAR Emergency Phase through initial or subsequent dialogue with the OIM.

- 8.7.4 Assuming the installation has gone to muster, an exchange of information in Appendix A will take place. The MRCC will ask if assistance is required. If the answer is “No” then the SMC will normally identify the relevant Emergency Phase as the Uncertainty Phase. The MRCC will continue to monitor the situation through regular updates from the OIM until such time as the OIM reports that the onboard situation has been resolved or the OIM reassesses the need for assistance and upgrading of the Emergency Phase.
- 8.7.5 If the OIM requests assistance in response to the question posed above, the MRCC will seek to establish whether the Distress Phase or Alert Phase applies.
- 8.7.6 Catastrophic situations are clearly Distress Phase from the outset. Other situations may be less clear and may be subject to a variety of additional factors – response times, day or night, current and forecast weather, numbers of persons at risk, options for evacuation etc.
- 8.7.7 Many offshore installations are located more than one hundred miles offshore. At night, in severe weather, helicopter assistance may be at least several hours away. Factor in a large number of persons to be evacuated and it can be seen that a broad interpretation may have to be taken when defining “immediate assistance”. An installation at risk from a drifting vessel which has a closest point of approach in 3 hours is in Distress now if it will take two hours for helicopters to arrive on scene before they even begin to undertake an evacuation.
- 8.7.8 Positive SAR action will normally only be undertaken upon a clear declaration of the Distress or Alert Phase.
- 8.7.9 In the most exceptional cases, the SMC may elect to task SAR units as a precautionary measure if they consider that the situation could deteriorate despite the OIM’s assessment of the situation. Ideally agreement should be reached between the OIM and SMC but if this is not possible, the SMC must then clearly identify the Emergency Phase and announce that to all parties.
- 8.7.10 The OIM is the individual with the statutory responsibility for responding to an emergency onboard an offshore installation. The role of the onshore ERR is to support the OIM. The MRCC must receive the declaration of Distress or Alert from the OIM or their designated deputy on board the installation.



IAMSAR Emergency Phases

- **Uncertainty Phase**
 - Installation at Muster. Investigation on-going. OIM comfortable with situation. No assistance requested. No SAR resources despatched.
- **Alert Phase**
 - A situation where the installation or people are in difficulty and may need assistance. SAR resources can be despatched if the situation has the potential to escalate to the Distress Phase.
- **Distress Phase**
 - Installation or persons are in danger and require immediate assistance. Note that “immediate assistance” should take account of projected response times.

IAMSAR Emergency Phases can be upgraded or downgraded as the situation evolves.

Figure 3 - IAMSAR Emergency Phases as applied to an offshore oil and gas industry incident

8.8 Importance of Declaring the Correct Emergency Phase

- 8.8.1 Civilian and military aircraft, along with vessels responding to an incident, will be familiar with IAMSAR.
- 8.8.2 United Kingdom civilian registered SAR helicopters are governed by the UK Air Navigation Order and an approval provided by the CAA (CAP 999 Helicopter Search and Rescue [SAR] in the UK. National Approval Guidance).
- 8.8.3 Modern civilian SAR helicopters are configured internally for SAR use and seating for evacuees is limited. In a distress situation, evacuees can be carried on the floor of the aircraft, unrestrained and overall numbers carried will be based on risk, all up weight, distance to nearest receptor installation etc. In the absence of a clear risk to life, the number of evacuees that the aircraft can carry may be limited by the number of available seats – subject to the aircraft captain's discretion.
- 8.8.4 A clear declaration of the Distress or Alert Phase facilitates the establishment of restricted airspace around the scene of an incident in order to provide safe management of the airspace and to exclude aircraft which are not part of the overall response.
- 8.8.5 In certain circumstances, CAT helicopters may form part of the SAR response. This is discussed more fully in section 8.10.
- 8.8.6 In a clearly identified Distress situation, nearby offshore installations (receptors) may be requested to take evacuees temporarily over and above lifeboat capacity or available beds. The rationale for this is to keep the number of helicopter movements as low as possible in order to minimise overall risk. In such circumstances when an installation becomes temporarily overmanned, the MRCC will liaise closely with the operator of the evacuated installation to ensure that evacuees are moved onwards as soon as possible.

8.9 Non-emergency Evacuations

- 8.9.1 Most incidents requiring assistance from national SAR assets will fall into the category of a Distress or Alert phase and defined as a Major Accident Hazard.
- 8.9.2 However, scenarios exist where an installation may be faced with a serious welfare issue e.g. a complete loss of power, and it is expected that the Duty Holder would wish to reduce the number of personnel on the installation.
- 8.9.3 Since these situations do not constitute an emergency as defined in PFEER, and while noting the unpleasant situation for personnel on the installation, a risk to the installation or personnel, based on the welfare scenario alone does not exist. As a result, such circumstances should be managed by the Duty Holder using CAT helicopters or other available means e.g. walk to work.
- 8.9.4 Should extenuating circumstances and additional factors e.g. severe weather, result in a heightened risk to personnel then HM Coastguard should be contacted, and national SAR resources **may** be available on a clear and justified declaration of the Alert or Distress phase. This scenario would be considered exceptional and require considerable discussion prior to mobilisation.

- 8.9.5 At all times the risk to the personnel remaining offshore should be considered against the risk of evacuating or down-manning¹⁸ them, particularly in the hours of darkness or in unfavourable weather conditions.
- 8.9.6 It could be considered that if an incident does not merit the consideration by the OIM on the use of TEMPSC then national SAR resources may not be justified.
- 8.9.7 Duty Holders are strongly encouraged to consider what procedures they have in place to respond to serious welfare issues occurring at all times of the day and night.

8.10 Use of Commercial Air Transport Helicopters in SAR Operations

- 8.10.1 CAT helicopter operations are conducted under UK Regulation (EU) 965/2012 (Air Operations) overseen by the CAA. Provided that flying operations conducted by helicopter operators during SAR operations stay within the bounds of Commercial Air Transport, there should be no restriction. This means that conditions on scene and surrounding an incident should not fall outside the bounds of normal Commercial Air Transport operations and that passengers on board the aircraft must be transported and equipped for safety purposes as they would be for CAT flights. If conditions are beyond normal operating criteria for CAT helicopters, such as meteorological conditions, fire, fumes or other similar events, then the general CAA view is that the additional risks would not be appropriate for CAT helicopters.
- 8.10.2 Effectively, it is reasonable for SAR authorities to request CAT helicopter assistance for multiple aircraft SAR operations (such as a platform evacuation) provided that conditions are within their normal capabilities. The SAR authorities cannot ask CAT helicopters to fly in dangerous conditions, transport numbers of people in excess of their normal passenger limits or to transport seriously injured or ill passengers.
- 8.10.3 All requests for CAT helicopter assistance must be routed through the relevant helicopter company onshore flight operations cell. Requests should not be made direct to aircraft captains who may be operating a helicopter in the vicinity of the incident. The flight operations cell is the appropriate level of decision making for the possible use of CAT helicopters operating as outlined in 8.10.1.
- 8.10.4 For regulatory purposes, SAR helicopters are different because they are trained, equipped, prepared and approved for operations in which the risks are greater than for CAT operations. SAR aircraft also have medical capabilities and can provide for the safety of injured passengers, who CAT helicopters must not carry unless the passengers are able to travel unassisted and egress the aircraft on their own during an emergency, or conditions as detailed in the offshore helicopter regulations contained in Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 Annex V at SPA.HOFO.165(i) 'Medically Incapacitated Passenger' and the accompanying Acceptable Means of Compliance. From these, each helicopter operator must establish procedures and processes to carry such passengers and any necessary dedicated persons to assist them.
- 8.10.5 For CAT operations at night, the installation helideck lighting systems should all be operational and, in all occasions, (day and night) the helideck firefighting system should remain serviceable¹⁹.

¹⁸ Downmanning in this context is used to describe the removal of individuals from an installation, in a controlled manner, using CAT helicopters and not during an emergency.

¹⁹ CAP 437 and Safety Directive SD-2019/002

8.11 Onshore Emergency Response

- 8.11.1 As described in 2.2.3, Duty Holders will have onshore support teams available to support the OIM.
- 8.11.2 Once mobilised, the onshore support team should be looking to make early contact with HM Coastguard, and it is important that this contact is maintained throughout the incident and clear notification is made when the team stands down. Should this not be forthcoming, the coordinating MRCC should look to make contact as soon as practicable.
- 8.11.3 HM Coastguard should always be maintaining contact with the OIM directly however regular communication with the onshore team allows for confirmation of information. The coordinating MRCC would also be requesting additional support from the onshore team including media statements/response numbers and relatives response numbers.
- 8.11.4 To aid the communication flow, the SMC may request a Maritime Incident Communications Officer (MICO) be mobilised by the Duty Holder to the coordinating MRCC. Depending on the geographic location of the incident, it may not be possible to deploy MICOs to the coordinating MRCC, however, given the functionality of HM Coastguard's national network, it is possible to deploy a MICO to another MRCC²⁰.
- 8.11.5 The MICO's role is primarily to provide a link back to the onshore support team but may also be colocated with an Incident Liaison Officer (ILO) and other MICOs e.g. from a helicopter operator or diving contractor.
- 8.11.6 Companies are recommended to consider the availability of this role and to provide them with adequate training. The MICO could be from any background, though a knowledge of the company infrastructure and of the installation concerned, would prove valuable during an incident. HM Coastguard offer training and liaison visits to MRCCs to further enhance this important capability.
- 8.11.7 A MICO should be encouraged to take copies of company emergency response plans and other documentation that would aid the MRCCs understanding of the situation.
- 8.11.8 To fully understand an offshore scenario, and to assist in the preparation of any emergency plan, the MRCC may elect to host a conference call with all relevant parties involved in an incident. This may include installation personnel, the ERR, JRCC AR, duty coastguard officers, police and SAR crews. This should be encouraged, particularly for complex incidents or where questions remain regarding an appropriate response.
- 8.11.9 During complex or protracted incidents, HM Coastguard may elect to send a trained National Inter-agency Liaison Officer (NILO) to a Duty Holder or other supporting organisation, to further enhance communications and engagement.

8.12 Procedures to Evacuate Personnel

- 8.12.1 Whenever personnel are being removed from an installation, it is important for all those involved to clearly understand the circumstances and operating environment of the incident.
- 8.12.2 The importance of terminology is key and when an emergency exists and SAR is involved, personnel are **evacuating** an installation. "Evacuation" is clearly defined in PFEER, as

²⁰ Example: an incident occurring in the SNS may be coordinated by MRCC Humber but the operator is based in Aberdeen so they could send a MICO to MRCC Aberdeen and still have access to the incident information.

detailed in section 2.1.6. There are a number of means of evacuation and the preferred one should be the normal means of getting to and from the installation, unless the emergency, or the circumstances in which it takes place, makes this impracticable²¹.

- 8.12.3 During an emergency, the priority is to remove personnel to the nearest place of safety, which in most circumstances, will be a neighbouring installation. It would be unusual for aircraft, particularly SAR aircraft, to evacuate personnel back to shore – unless this was a quicker and/or more efficient option.
- 8.12.4 Should an evacuation be required, HM Coastguard will look to ascertain which neighbouring installations are available to receive personnel (receptor) in addition to determining details such as refuelling capabilities, medical facilities and communications. The ERR may also look to contact these installations to establish similar information. There is the potential during such circumstances for a duplication of effort to exist.
- 8.12.5 To make this process more efficient, HM Coastguard and the ERR should discuss who is best placed to make these calls. This may well be the ERR if they have more capacity to do so, however this will likely depend on how long it takes for them to mobilise and when the information is required. In any case, a form has been created to be completed during this information gathering phase. The form includes information required by HM Coastguard and the JRCC AR and once completed, should be passed to the relevant MRCC to determine which installations are required.
- 8.12.6 It may be preferable to a Duty Holder to evacuate personnel to installations owned/operated by them and while effort may be made to accommodate this, HM Coastguard has to prioritise the efficient removal of personnel and consider the safety and operational requirements of the responding aircraft.
- 8.12.7 The use of multiple aircraft is discussed in section 9 however it is equally important for the installation to be prepared for the evacuation, recognising that an evacuation only occurs during an emergency.
- 8.12.8 HM Coastguard will unlikely be able to inform the Duty Holder and/or installation of the number of personnel to be evacuated on each SAR helicopter. This is due to a number of factors but ultimately, the decision on this number will be made by the SAR aircraft commander and often once an assessment of the situation and conditions have been made onscene.
- 8.12.9 As a result, the installation should **not** attempt to use Vantage (or other electronic tracking systems) during an evacuation. Doing so can cause significant delays and ultimately add to confusion. Personnel should be tracked manually and accounted for electronically, as required, following the evacuation.
- 8.12.10 Due to the emergency nature of an evacuation, and the use of SAR aircraft, personnel should not take any baggage with them. Bags can cause additional weight implications but also would not be secured in the cabin, as they would in CAT aircraft, which creates a safety issue. Additionally, as personnel may be required to sit on the floor of a SAR aircraft, bags also limit the available space.
- 8.12.11 While personnel may have time to prepare for an evacuation, they should also be aware that they may be requested to board a SAR aircraft without normal PPE such as lifejackets.

²¹ PFEER Associated Code of Practice paragraph 204

- 8.12.12 If the OIM elects to leave a skeleton crew on board the installation, there must be dialogue with the SMC and others. Options for recovering the final number should be considered and incorporated into the action plan. The number left on board should normally be equal to or less than the capacity of one helicopter lift.
- 8.12.13 With the exception of non-emergency evacuations as detailed in section 8.9, the removal of personnel during occasions not deemed an emergency should be managed by the Duty Holder. Terminology such as “downman” is more appropriate in these circumstances to help distinguish between this process using CAT helicopters and an emergency evacuation.

8.13 Emergency Response Plans

- 8.13.1 It is vital that Emergency Response Plans are current and accurate to ensure effective emergency response.
- 8.13.2 The ERPs should be updated regularly and validated with HM Coastguard and the other emergency services during exercises and other training. This enables any required updates to be made in line with current procedures.
- 8.13.3 HM Coastguard does not hold copies of these ERPs and therefore as highlighted in 8.11.7, it may be prudent for the MRCC to be supplied with relevant documentation during an incident.
- 8.13.4 However, an Installation Summary Sheet template has been created which includes a summary of the key information of each installation owned/operated by a Duty Holder. Every Duty Holder is strongly recommended to ensure HM Coastguard has a current document for their assets, which is also shared with the police, and is valuable during any emergency or exercise.

8.14 Myths and Misconceptions

- 8.14.1 “MAYDAY is when you abandon”. In a catastrophic situation, MAYDAY may well mean abandonment. However, an installation or vessel can declare a MAYDAY or Distress situation and any of the following can take place
- Nobody is taken off. The situation that brought about the MAYDAY is addressed or resolved by those on board or conditions are such that no evacuations are possible and doing so would place persons in increased danger.
 - A partial emergency evacuation takes place. Numbers are reduced. The situation is either resolved by those remaining on board or the overall threat has been reduced by minimising the number of persons at risk.
 - Complete evacuation.
- 8.14.2 “If you request assistance it’s a Distress”. If assistance is requested, it is either the Distress Phase or the Alert Phase. The Alert Phase may place restrictions on the response, but it must always be considered.
- 8.14.3 “If it’s a Distress it’s everyone off”. In a catastrophic situation that may well be the case. However, the decision on how many persons are to be taken off ultimately lies with the OIM or the Master of a vessel and all three options outlined in 8.14.1 are available to them. The SMC can advise the OIM or Master of a vessel of factors that may influence that decision but the final decision rests with the OIM or Master.

9 Aviation Procedures and Guidance

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 Offshore oil and gas industry incidents are complex for a variety of reasons including the likely combination of national SAR, offshore SAR and CAT helicopters operating in close proximity.
- 9.1.2 Detailed procedures for helicopters are contained in IAMSAR Volume II Chapter 7. This section attempts to give an overview and guidance to the offshore oil and gas industry, MRCC and JRCC AR personnel and for those responding to the incident on-scene.
- 9.1.3 Oil and gas industry exploration and production is focussed primarily on five main areas on the UKCS – Northern North Sea (NNS), Central North Sea (CNS), Southern North Sea (SNS), West of Shetland (WoS) and the East Irish Sea (EIS). With the exception of the East Irish Sea, all the above areas are covered by one Air Traffic Services Unit based at Aberdeen Airport. The East Irish Sea is covered by Blackpool.
- 9.1.4 Procedures in this section are directed primarily at incidents in the NNS, CNS, SNS and WoS. However, procedures in the East Irish Sea should, as far as is possible, be consistent with the broad approach.

9.2 Aviation Procedures and Guidance

- 9.2.1 At the outset of an offshore incident, Aberdeen ATSU will have the best overview of the local air picture – particularly so if the incident involves a helicopter emergency.
- 9.2.2 All communications are likely to be routed through the ATSU Watch Manager (WM) until back up personnel can be drafted in. HM Coastguard must be careful not to overload the ATSU WM by duplicating requests for information. A coordinated or agreed approach is needed.
- 9.2.3 If two or more aircraft are likely to respond, an ACO will likely be appointed. This will normally be undertaken by JRCC AR in consultation with the SMC.
- 9.2.4 If two or more aircraft are likely to respond, restricted airspace under the Emergency Restriction of Flying (ERF) Regulations should be established around the incident. Any request for the establishment of a Restricted Area (Temporary) [RA(T)] will normally be undertaken by the JRCC AR on behalf of the SMC. The request will be made to the Safety and Airspace Regulation Group of the CAA who will review the application, establish restricted airspace if appropriate and promulgate details. Dimensions of the restricted area will normally be cylindrical based on a centre point with a radius in nautical miles and height expressed in thousands of feet. When nearby installations form part of the SAR response as refuelling or receptor facilities, the restricted area should include these installations and allow for a safe margin. Although JRCC AR will normally take responsibility for requesting the RA(T), JRCC AR must consult both the SMC and Aberdeen ATSU in order that correct dimensions can be agreed at the outset.
- 9.2.5 The primary reason for establishing the RA(T) must always be to allow for the safe management of aircraft responding to the incident. This will facilitate the collapse of the restricted airspace when SAR operations are complete and will not impact on subsequent air operations – counter pollution or recovery.
- 9.2.6 The SMC will be responsible for determining which installations are capable of acting as refuelling or receptor facilities.

- 9.2.7 Management of aircraft within the RA(T) will be delegated by the Emergency Authority (MRCC or JRCC AR) to the ACO. Air to air and air to surface communications will be undertaken on the international on-scene frequency of 123.100 MHz following an announcement by the MRCC or ACO. It is the responsibility of the SMC to ensure that the affected installation, refuelling and receptor installations are monitoring 123.100 MHz.
- 9.2.8 Offshore installations should ensure that they have the ability to transmit & receive on 123.100 MHz. The CAA has approved the use of 123.100 MHz by offshore installations in declared emergency situations and has stated that it can be included within an installation's existing aeronautical licence at no additional cost. However, each installation will have to apply individually to the CAA for this approval.
- 9.2.9 If 123.100 MHz becomes congested or unworkable, the fall-back frequency will normally be the traffic frequency for the local area.
- 9.2.10 Aircraft en-route to the incident will be managed by Aberdeen ATSU in accordance with normal procedures. Aberdeen ATSU will hand over management of the aircraft to the ACO before the aircraft enters the RA(T). The procedure will work in reverse as aircraft leave the RA(T) – e.g. with injured personnel or evacuees being taken ashore.
- 9.2.11 Aircraft will only be able to enter the RA(T) with the approval of the ACO. The ACO will always have the final say in how many aircraft can be safely managed within the RA(T) at any given time.
- 9.2.12 JRCC AR and MRCC must avoid overloading the ACO. In order to facilitate the movement of a large number of evacuees, the MRCC should provide the ACO with details of receptor & refuelling installations and overall complement to be moved. The SMC should not attempt to micro-manage the evacuation by allocating specific numbers for each installation. In a distress situation, the emphasis should be on reducing the overall complement of the stricken installation by the quickest means.

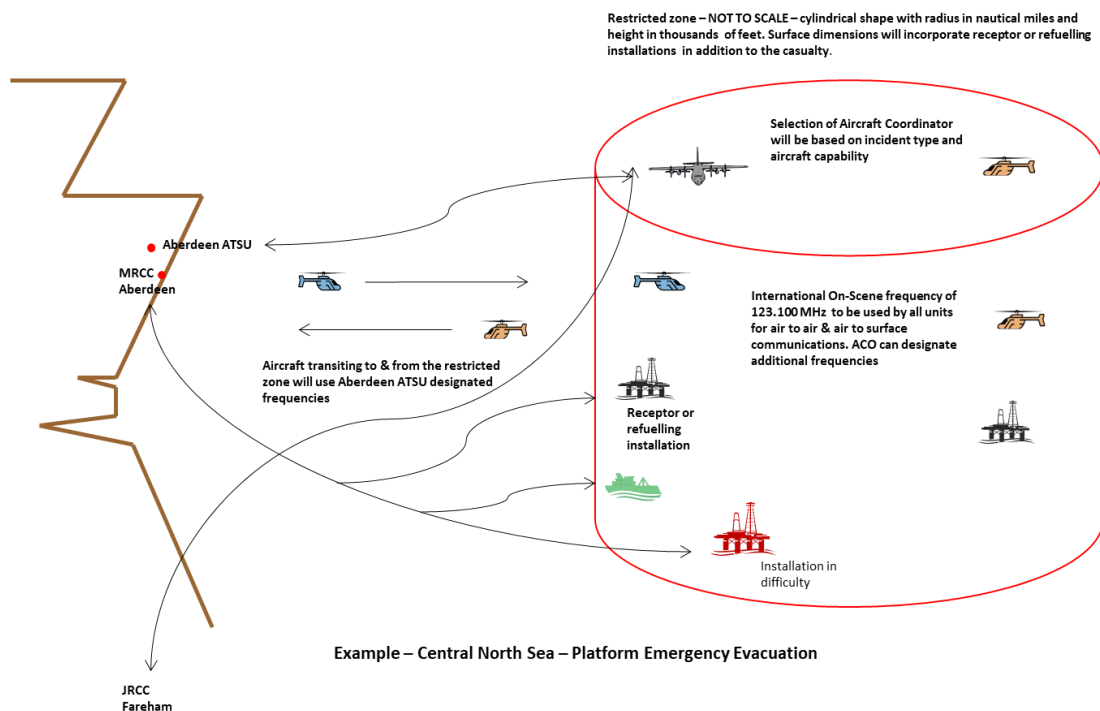


Figure 4 - IOER Aviation & Communications Plan. Example considers a platform emergency evacuation in the Central North Sea.

- 9.2.13 As mentioned earlier in this document, the duty holder ERR, acting in support of the OIM, may source and despatch CAT helicopters to assist in bringing evacuees back to the shore. It is of the utmost importance, however, that there is close interaction between the MRCC and the duty holder regarding the deployment of these aircraft. It may be necessary to delay despatching them until SAR operations are coming to a close.

10 Helicopter Ditch or Crash into the Sea – Procedures & Guidance

10.1 Helicopter Incident at or near an Installation

- 10.1.1 If a helicopter suffers an incident at or near an offshore installation it will be treated as an offshore incident and HM Coastguard's primary point of contact will be via the OIM and the duty holder ERR.
- 10.1.2 Although the duty holder is considered to have primacy over the helicopter owner, best practice suggests that a pre-agreed bridging document laying out areas of responsibility and mutual support should be developed by the duty holder and helicopter operator.
- 10.1.3 As detailed in section 8.11, HM Coastguard will request MICOs from the duty holder and helicopter owner attend the coordinating, or nearest, MRCC.
- 10.1.4 Whenever possible, a police ILO will attend at the coordinating, or nearest, MRCC.

10.2 Helicopter Incidents While En-route to or Returning from an Offshore Installation

- 10.2.1 Four out of five of the incidents between 2009 and 2013 came into this category. Although all four were carrying offshore oil and gas industry workers they did not come under PFEER jurisdiction and are therefore classified as aviation incidents.
- 10.2.2 For en-route helicopter incidents, HM Coastguard will rapidly establish the identity of the aircraft through Aberdeen ATSU. HM Coastguard's primary point of contact will be through the helicopter owner's local base or ERR.
- 10.2.3 HM Coastguard will rely on the helicopter owner to identify which offshore installation duty holder or operator will take the lead in representing the passengers.
- 10.2.4 Although the helicopter owner is considered to have primacy over the identified duty holder or offshore operator, best practice suggests that a pre-agreed bridging document laying out areas of responsibility and mutual support should be developed by the helicopter owner and duty holder.
- 10.2.5 As detailed in section 8.11, HM Coastguard will request MICOs from the duty holder and helicopter owner attend the coordinating, or nearest, MRCC.
- 10.2.6 Whenever possible, a police ILO will attend at the coordinating, or nearest, MRCC.

10.3 Recovery of Aircraft

- 10.3.1 The recovery of an abandoned aircraft is out with the scope of the IOER document and enters the world of salvage.
- 10.3.2 It is important to note, however, that recovery of the aircraft in as intact a condition as possible will aid the accident investigators in identifying the factors that may have contributed to the aircraft's demise. In the aviation world, examination and analysis of the

aircraft or debris may lead to remedial action being undertaken on similar aircraft across the world before they too are impacted.

11 Use of Remotely Operated Vehicles during a Distress Situation

11.1 Availability of Remotely Operated Vehicles

- 11.1.1 Specialised offshore vessels have the ability to deploy Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) for a variety of subsea tasks in support of the offshore oil and gas industry. ROVs can range in complexity from a basic observation type fitted with cameras which relay pictures back to the mother ship, up to complex work ROVs fitted with manipulators capable of carrying out subsea work in addition to the cameras. The North Sea has the greatest concentration of ROV fitted vessels in European waters.

11.2 Use of ROVs during a Distress Situation

- 11.2.1 ROVs can be used in certain circumstances to assist during a Distress situation when a search is being conducted for persons in the water. The use of ROVs escalate a two-dimensional surface search into a three-dimensional search. Their use is most effective when the datum for the search is established with a high degree of accuracy and surface units are quickly on scene. ROVs have been used successfully in incidents of man overboard from an installation and following a fatal helicopter crash. Although these incidents clearly did not have a positive outcome, locating the missing persons on the seabed enabled a clear cessation of SAR activity and transition to the recovery phase.
- 11.2.2 Owners of vessels fitted with ROVs have stated that they see the use of a ROV during a Distress situation as an extension of the mother ship's response under international conventions.
- 11.2.3 It must be made clear, however, that such usage is linked only to the Distress situation and for the sole purpose of locating or accounting for any missing persons. The SMC may require a statement or agreement with the vessel to this effect.
- 11.2.4 In Integrated Offshore Emergency Response, close liaison with partner agencies or authorities will be established at the outset. Although the use of a ROV to assist in the location of missing persons can be seen as part of the SAR effort, the investigating agencies such as Police, AAIB, MAIB and/or HSE Energy Division must be kept fully apprised of the operation. Recovery, in the widest sense, will be led by one of these agencies or a combination of them and may involve a commercial contract.
- 11.2.5 Some specialist offshore support vessels operate divers in support of subsurface offshore oil and gas operations. HM Coastguard is not authorised to request their assistance or to accept any offer of assistance.

12 Offshore Medical Evacuation (Medevac) – Procedures & Guidance

12.1 Terminology & Definitions

- 12.1.1 IAMSAR defines Medevac as "Evacuation of a person for medical reasons".
- 12.1.2 An expanded definition could be "Evacuation of a sick (patient) or injured (casualty) person from a hostile environment to a place of safety where the appropriate level of medical attention can be provided". For ease of reference in this document, the term casualty is used throughout.

- 12.1.3 In the interests of standardisation, the use of other terminology such as Medrescue and Casevac is discouraged.
- 12.1.4 Medevacs can be carried out by helicopter or by surface craft such as RNLI lifeboats. For the purposes of this document, however, the use of medevac almost exclusively relates to evacuation by helicopter.

12.2 Advice and Authorisation

- 12.2.1 Any vessel or installation with a medical situation offshore, should have access to medical support onshore. This is normally provided via a telemedicine service. The following paragraphs detail recognised medical sources.
- 12.2.2 The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has contracted Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth to provide a Telemedical Advice Service (TMAS) to ships and seafarers. Vessels requiring medical advice will be put in contact with doctors trained in providing remote medical advice and assessment. If appropriate, the doctor will recommend that the casualty be evacuated (i.e. medevac).
- 12.2.3 The offshore oil and gas industry contracts medical support to specialised companies known generically as “Topside doctors” or “Topside medical support”. On the UKCS, HM Coastguard recognises several companies operating in this capacity²². Each company is responsible for maintaining their competence through regular liaison with HM Coastguard. Should a company not be familiar to HM Coastguard, or concerns exist regarding their competence, HM Coastguard may request the use of TMAS and follow-up with the relevant company.
- 12.2.4 It is accepted that foreign flag vessels may elect to seek medical advice through the SAR services provided by the relevant flag state. Medical advice provided via this route is also accepted as an “equivalent medical source”.
- 12.2.5 All requests for medevacs, using SAR resources, from vessels or offshore installations in the UK SRR, have to be authorised by a doctor²³ familiar with medevac procedures.
- 12.2.6 HM Coastguard chair the ‘Topside Medical Forum’, a biannual meeting to discuss offshore medical evacuations and issues. Documentation produced by this group can be found on the EPOL website.

²² A list of recognised companies is held on HM Coastguard’s internal coastguard information portal and is updated as required.

²³ Exceptions may apply – see below for more detail.

12.3 Routine or Emergency Medevacs

- 12.3.1 Depending on the medical condition of the casualty, offshore medical evacuations are classed as Routine or Emergency. This section supplements information provided in OGUK's Guidelines for the Management of Aviation Operations.
- 12.3.2 It should be noted that CAT helicopters are not certified, role equipped or crewed to undertake SAR duties such as evacuating a stretchered casualty and/or undertaking medical supervision and clinical procedures (e.g. monitoring and defibrillator use during flight).
- 12.3.3 Routine Medevacs. If the casualty is physically mobile (e.g. capable of unassisted emergency escape or evacuation, has a non-urgent medical condition and/or does not need a paramedic escort) these evacuation flights can be undertaken using a helicopter operating for the commercial transport of passengers and conducted to the full set of rules offering the highest mitigation of risk (e.g. scheduled crew change).
- 12.3.4 Emergency Medevacs. In the event that a casualty requires transportation in a stretcher or requires professional medical surveillance for the duration of the flight (e.g. by a paramedic), the casualty should be removed from an offshore installation or vessel only by a SAR helicopter operating under pre-existing CAA AOC and legal alleviations.
- 12.3.5 If the casualty is incapacitated by an injury that inhibits full mobility (e.g. a limb is immobilised) and/or for instance cannot don a survival suit, but does not require the services of a SAR helicopter, the casualty may be able to be transported by a CAT Helicopter (See 8.10.4).
- 12.3.6 Emergency Medevacs which do not require a SAR helicopter do not need to be notified to HM Coastguard. Following suitable authorisation from a topside doctor, the onshore logistics team for the Duty Holder must investigate all reasonable evacuation options which may include speaking to different CAT helicopter operators. Each helicopter operator will make an assessment on the incident on a case by case basis along with their individual operating procedures.
- 12.3.7 Should a delay occur in incidents as detailed in 12.3.5, or if CAT helicopter operators are unable to carry out the evacuation, HM Coastguard should be contacted, and it may be possible for a SAR helicopter to be mobilised.

12.4 Procedures for Requesting Medevac Assistance

- 12.4.1 A suitably trained and qualified medic is normally employed on offshore installations. In most cases, the medic will consult the contracted topside doctor before any request for helicopter assistance. Should the medic be engaged in treating the casualty and/or be out on deck and unable to speak to a doctor, another individual should make contact e.g. a first aider or the OIM. A doctor should not insist on speaking to the medic, particularly in the initial stages, if it will unduly impact the treatment being provided to the casualty.
- 12.4.2 If the doctor recommends evacuation but the casualty does not require the services of a SAR helicopter, then an evacuation should be arranged by the Duty Holder using CAT aircraft.
- 12.4.3 Should a SAR helicopter be required, due to the casualty's condition or because all other options have been exhausted, HM Coastguard should be contacted. The MRCC will expect to receive a call from the medic or installation personnel and the topside doctor.

- 12.4.4 When making the request, the medic or installation personnel will be expected to provide the MRCC with basic medical information about the casualty's condition, name of topside doctor, case number (where applicable) and how to contact them. Standard information on weather conditions on scene, confirmation of position, helideck availability, refuelling capability and air frequency should also be provided.
- 12.4.5 Following the consultation with the medic (or delegate), the topside doctor must initiate contact with HM Coastguard to confirm the need for evacuation, initial assessment of the casualty's condition, the timescale within which the evacuation should be carried out and the type of medical facilities likely to be required onshore. This must be done as a matter of priority – the helicopter will not be tasked without doctor's recommendation in all but very exceptional circumstances e.g. ongoing CPR or limb amputation. The form in Appendix D shows the type of information which should be included.
- 12.4.6 The topside doctor should contact HM Coastguard via the dedicated medevac telephone number²⁴.
- 12.4.7 The topside doctor may be able to send an electronic version of the consultation to the MRCC, after initial contact is made by telephone. This should be discussed with the MRCC during the call but may reduce inaccuracy associated with verbal communication.
- 12.4.8 Subsequent coordination of the medevac may be handed to another MRCC but appropriate telephone numbers will be clearly communicated.
- 12.4.9 The doctor must provide a timescale within which the evacuation should be carried out²⁵. A guidance document is available on the EPOL website, as per 12.2.6 which contains guidance on the use of the timescales. One of the following options should be used:
- Immediate
 - As soon as practicable (within 6 hours)
 - Within 12 hours
 - Within 24 hours
 - If symptoms worsen
- 12.4.10 Doctors must avoid further refining these options which are designed to provide a plain English benchmark upon which to base a decision for tasking a SAR helicopter, including the option to make the transfer in daylight or with more favourable forecast weather conditions.
- 12.4.11 In situations where evacuation is requested within 12 or 24 hours, HM Coastguard will look for an update from the doctor or medic every 6 hours to ascertain whether the casualty's condition has improved or deteriorated. This does not mean the coordinating MRCC will begin the process from the start but is intended to allow for improved communication and most effective use of SAR resources.
- 12.4.12 HM Coastguard is aware of the use of triage scales across the offshore oil and gas industry (e.g. Priority 1, 2 and 3) but do not use them. The use of timescale for evacuation is mandatory when requesting helicopter assistance. It is already in use by HM Coastguard, UK SAR helicopters and the TMAS contracted hospitals and a plain English system greatly facilitates procedures when dealing with Rescue Coordination Centres or SAR helicopters in adjacent countries.

²⁴ This number is for topside doctors only and can be made available by contacting HM Coastguard's Offshore Energy Team.

²⁵ Timescales relate to the total time required to evacuate a casualty back to a suitable hospital onshore.

- 12.4.13 If the doctor's decision is "may need to come off if the condition of the casualty deteriorates", the doctor should discuss this with the appropriate MRCC. The SMC will, in conjunction with JRCC AR and SAR helicopter captain, consider the forecast weather and remaining daylight. Under these circumstances, the SMC, JRCC AR and SAR helicopter captain may discuss whether a pre-emptive evacuation might be a better and safer solution for all concerned. The MRCC will then communicate this operational decision to the doctor and the offshore Installation. Otherwise, the doctor may recontact HM Coastguard if the symptoms do worsen and discuss a new timescale classification.
- 12.4.14 In certain exceptional circumstances, such as traumatic injury, it is highly likely that the installation medic will be fully occupied in dealing with the casualty and, therefore, unable to speak to the doctor. Under such circumstances, the installation should provide the MRCC with as much information regarding the injury/illness as possible. The SMC may then request helicopter assistance from the JRCC AR before medical authorisation has been obtained. Consultation with the doctor should be undertaken subsequently and at the earliest opportunity in order to confirm the tasking and to provide relevant medical advice.
- 12.4.15 In the case of a collapsed person where the medic is similarly occupied and unable to speak to the doctor, a slightly different procedure applies. The cause of the collapse may be attributable to a variety of reasons – not all of which require immediate tasking of a SAR helicopter. In such cases, the SMC may elect to put the installation in contact with doctors, either from the company topside medical support or at a TMA hospital, in order that advice and helicopter authorisation can be promptly obtained if necessary. If the installation medic is dealing with the casualty, the installation OIM or a trained first aider should be prepared to speak to the doctor on behalf of the medic.
- 12.4.16 These instructions cannot define every eventuality, but it is considered possible that there may be occasions when a doctor's decision is complex given the available information from offshore. While the doctor should, in all cases, stick to the timescales defined in 12.4.9, they may require a more calculated decision and the MRCC should facilitate this process as much as possible e.g. providing weather information or aircraft limitations.

12.5 SAR Procedures

- 12.5.1 Upon receiving the request for medical evacuation and the doctor's authorisation, the MRCC will forward the details to the JRCC AR which maintains a national overview of all SAR capable helicopters. The JRCC AR is responsible for tasking all national UK SAR helicopters and for requesting assistance from neighbouring states or from industry SAR helicopter operators.
- 12.5.2 Occasionally, selection of the most appropriate asset is straightforward. More often, the decision is complex being based on a variety of factors – aircraft availability, speed of response, current and forecast weather conditions, destination hospital, concurrent incidents and conflicting priorities etc. The quality and quantity of information provided by the installation and the doctor greatly assists the decision-making process.
- 12.5.3 The destination hospital will be determined initially at this time, based on the medical facilities advised by the doctor, and HM Coastguard will normally notify the receiving hospital and make arrangements for reception, helipad lighting and ambulance transfer etc.
- 12.5.4 It should be noted that in some of the most urgent cases, particularly those originating in the Northern North Sea, the most appropriate hospital based on speed of response and medical capability, may be in Norway.

- 12.5.5 It may be appropriate, following the doctor's recommendation of appropriate medical facilities, for the MRCC to conduct a conference call with JRCC AR, receiving hospital and other relevant parties as required. This is to ensure that the correct facilities and treatment can be provided to the casualty, while ensuring the helicopter can return to operational availability in good time.
- 12.5.6 Once the helicopter crew have recovered the casualty, they will make a clinical assessment of the casualty condition. This might confirm the destination hospital. It may, however, require upgrading or downgrading the plan – either of which may require a change in destination.
- 12.5.7 On occasions where the helicopter crew deem a change in destination necessary following a clinical assessment (e.g. airport transfer rather than straight to hospital), the doctor should be advised and if there are any remaining concerns, a connect call should be conducted via the coordinating MRCC.
- 12.5.8 During the flight back to the hospital, the crew of the SAR helicopter can obtain further specialist medical advice or provide the receiving hospital with updated details of the casualty's condition via a radio link call or satellite phone. Wherever possible, this should be conducted via the coordinating MRCC.
- 12.5.9 During the planning of more complex cases or where clinical complexity requires a doctor-to-doctor call, if there are uncertainties regarding the capabilities of receiving hospitals and/or alternative arrangements are required at the receiving hospital (e.g. bypassing the emergency department), it may be appropriate for the topside doctor to engage with the receiving hospital. In these circumstances, the topside doctor must confirm the ultimate destination of the casualty and provide an update to the hospital, if a change in destination is determined by HM Coastguard or SAR crew.
- 12.5.10 It should be noted that while HM Coastguard should initiate and facilitate required conference calls, if detailed clinical information is required to be discussed, it may be more appropriate and suitable for clinicians (e.g. topside doctors, medics and SAR paramedics/doctors) to have a one to one discussion. If this does occur, a representative from this call must provide a summary of the discussions to the MRCC, to ensure efficient coordination of the overall incident.

12.6 Fatality procedures

- 12.6.1 As per 12.4 above, HM Coastguard requires a doctor's authorisation prior to tasking a SAR helicopter for a medical evacuation (medevac) other than where exceptions apply such as ongoing CPR or limb amputation. On occasions where an aircraft is tasked immediately, input from a doctor is still required while the aircraft is en-route.
- 12.6.2 Should the doctor and medic agree that any resuscitation efforts should cease, HM Coastguard will normally stand the aircraft down and it will return to base.
- 12.6.3 Should the aircraft arrive at the installation, the paramedic will assess the casualty and carry on with life saving care. However, they may then declare death and provide 'Verification of Death' paperwork (this is also known as Recognition of Life Extinct (ROLE)). In this circumstance, the person will be left on the installation and the aircraft will return to their base.
- 12.6.4 In all cases involving fatalities, or situations which may end in a fatality, both HM Coastguard and the duty holder should notify the police. The police will then be

responsible for leading on the investigation and follow-up actions, liaising with relevant duty holder personnel. The procedures for this fall out of scope of IOER.

- 12.6.5 However, the police will liaise with the duty holder to arrange for re-patriation, which in most cases, will involve the use of a CAT helicopter.
- 12.6.6 There may be circumstances involving a fatality, where there is a risk of losing the body e.g. in some maritime incidents, and it may therefore be appropriate for a SAR helicopter or other resource, to recover them. This would normally be conducted with full input from the police.

12.7 Acute Psychiatric Emergencies

- 12.7.1 The Topside Medical Forum has created the document 'Acute Psychiatric Emergencies – A Practical Approach in the Remote Environment' which provides guidance to assist in the assessment, management and transportation of individuals with acute mental health issues in the offshore oil and gas industry around the coast of the British Isles.
- 12.7.2 If a person requiring evacuation, to which this section refers, is onboard a vessel, the best option may be for the ship to return to port with the individual being closely monitored at all times.
- 12.7.3 If the person requiring evacuation, to which this section refers, is onboard an offshore installation, the only option is likely to return them to shore by helicopter. There may be risks involved and the evacuation will only be undertaken after detailed discussion between all interested parties. This will normally include the doctor recommending the evacuation, the MRCC, JRCC AR, the SAR helicopter captain and, in certain circumstances, the police. It should be noted that as long as the individual is being closely monitored on board the installation, there is likely to be no requirement for an immediate response and that time will normally be available to explore all options.

13 Hyperbaric Lifeboats and Saturation Diving

13.1 Overview and Definitions

- 13.1.1 Despite the increasing use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) in the subsea aspects of offshore oil and gas industry exploration and production, a significant proportion of subsea work on the UKCS is still undertaken by divers. Typically in the North Sea, this will require divers to operate in water depths of up to 180 metres although saturation diving can be extended to water depths of 250 to 300 metres.
- 13.1.2 Hyperbaric is an adjective relating to anything operating or occurring at pressures higher than normal atmospheric pressure e.g. *hyperbaric lifeboat*, *hyperbaric chamber*.
- 13.1.3 Saturation diving is a diving operation where the diver is continuously subject to an ambient pressure, greater than atmospheric pressure, so that all their body tissues and blood become saturated with the inert component of the breathing mixture.
- 13.1.4 Saturation diving is normally undertaken from a specialised Diving Support Vessel (DSV). Divers live on board the vessel in a diving chamber at the same pressure they will be conducting work operations and they are transferred to and from their place of work via a diving bell. The diving bell itself, is usually routed through a moonpool located within the hull of the DSV.

- 13.1.5 Divers operating in saturation require a prolonged period of decompression in order to bring them safely back to surface pressure. In the case of divers operating at a water depth of 180 metres, this will normally take at least 5 days.
- 13.1.6 In the event of an incident occurring to the DSV which results in the crew having to abandon, the divers will evacuate to a self-propelled hyperbaric lifeboat (SPHL) which is capable of carrying them under pressure. The majority of UKCS DSVs carry twin hyperbaric lifeboats, one on each side of the vessel, each of which will be capable of accommodating all the divers in saturation. There are some vessels with only one hyperbaric lifeboat which can accommodate the full saturation compliment and those with twin hyperbaric lifeboats who can only carry a full complement of the saturation system divers if both lifeboats are utilised.

13.2 Incidents Involving Saturated Divers in Hyperbaric Lifeboats

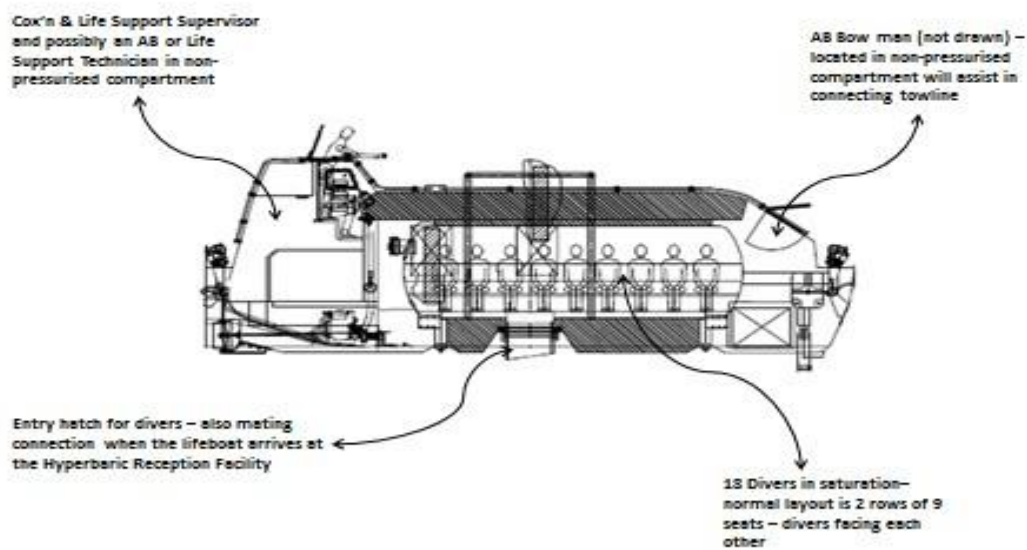
- 13.2.1 Hyperbaric evacuation of saturated divers represents a major emergency that will require the active participation of many organisations and companies if the operation is to succeed. A hyperbaric evacuation of saturated divers is only likely to take place if remaining on the DSV itself is no longer viable i.e. the DSV has suffered damage following a collision, fire etc.
- 13.2.2 In such circumstances, a full Distress situation will exist. The majority of the DSV crew will evacuate by normal ship's lifeboat, liferaft etc. SAR helicopters may be able to assist in the evacuation of crewmembers either from the parent vessel or the normal lifeboats. For divers under saturation, however, the only method of evacuation is by use of the hyperbaric lifeboat or lifeboats.
- 13.2.3 For reasons outlined later in this Chapter, the threat to the divers remains until the SPHL is brought to a Hyperbaric Reception Facility (HRF) or to a safe haven with suitable life support package and the situation therefore remains in the Distress Phase until that objective is achieved.



13.3 Hyperbaric Lifeboats

- 13.3.1 Hyperbaric lifeboats can accommodate as many as 24 divers in saturation. The lifeboat crew is formed from members of the crew of the parent DSV. They will normally number 3 or 4 depending on the size of the SPHL and they operate out with the hyperbaric section of the SPHL i.e. at ambient atmospheric (sea level) pressure.
- 13.3.2 The SPHL crew are required to maintain the life support function of the chambers and need to be dual qualified to meet SOLAS and diving requirements. The Diving at work regulations requires there to be a diving supervisor in charge of a dive at all times and these divers being under pressure fall into that category. The SPHL can be launched either by the SPHL crew or the DSV deck crew.

Example – 18 Diver Capacity Hyperbaric Lifeboat



- 13.3.3 A modern SPHL with full complement of 24 divers plus 4 crew may weigh in excess of 24 tonne. It will contain a. equipment to filter, clean and recirculate the breathing mix along with additional supplies. DSVs can have up to 24 divers in saturation.
- 13.3.4 The SPHL is capable of supporting the divers for up to 72 hours. Industry standards in the North Sea require the SPHL to be brought to a HRF within 54 hours. The diving companies maintain additional Life Support Packages which can be transported to a safe haven i.e. a nearby port where they can be used to extend the life support functions on the SPHL beyond 72 hours. This option may be used if transit to the nearest HRF cannot be achieved within the required timescale.

13.4 Hyperbaric Reception Facility

- 13.4.1 Hyperbaric reception facilities can be either fixed or portable. The fixed systems are built into onshore facilities. There are two designated fixed HRFs available for DSVs operating in the North Sea - one in Aberdeen and one in Bergen.
- 13.4.2 In the UK, the National Hyperbaric Centre is located near to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary complex approximately 3 miles from Aberdeen harbour. The hyperbaric lifeboat, complete with divers and LSP, will require to be lifted from the water on to a low loader and taken to the National Hyperbaric Centre. Ports other than Aberdeen may be used.
- 13.4.3 In Norway, the Norwegian Underwater Intervention facility is located on the quayside at Bergen. The hyperbaric lifeboat will be lifted from the water and mated directly with the hyperbaric reception centre.
- 13.4.4 Each SPHL will have been trial mated (and potentially require specific interface cradles, trunking and adaptors) to specific HRFs. The diving contractors will note the nominated HRFs in their Hyperbaric Evacuation Plan.
- 13.4.5 Portable systems are held either assembled at a pre-determined location and act as a temporary fixed HRF or are maintained in readiness on standby ready to be mobilised and transported to the required location within a pre-determined time scale.
- 13.4.6 In either of the pHRF scenarios it is anticipated that land transport of the SPHL is minimised and the SPHL can be lifted directly onto the HRF or moved a short distance within the self-support capability of the unit out with the public road system i.e. within a harbour area.

13.5 SAR Procedures for Hyperbaric Lifeboats

- 13.5.1 Evacuation of saturated divers by hyperbaric lifeboat is an option of last resort. It will normally only take place following a serious incident to the parent DSV – fire, collision, flooding etc. The only circumstance in which it may take place as a precautionary measure is if the DSV is disabled and drifting e.g. towards an offshore installation or towards a lee shore. In this case, if the vessel regains power, the best option is for the parent DSV to recover the lifeboat itself. Sea conditions, however, may preclude this.
- 13.5.2 The MRCC should establish contact with the DSV Operator at the earliest opportunity. Wherever possible, a MICO should be requested to attend at the coordinating MRCC or the nearest MRCC. The response to an incident involving a hyperbaric lifeboat presents unique challenges and the MRCC response must be guided by the specialist knowledge of the DSV Operator.
- 13.5.3 As outlined previously, this is a Distress situation and remains so until the divers are taken to a safe haven or to a hyperbaric reception facility. No attempt should be made to open any of the hatches without the permission of the on-board LSS and/or DSV Operator onshore. Doing so may have fatal consequences for those inside and for anyone attempting to open any hatches.
- 13.5.4 The SPHLs rely on seawater cooling for primary and secondary power generation (lighting and CO₂ scrubbing), cooling and heating. If an SPHL is lifted from the water, it therefore requires to be connected to external support services, typically via an LSP.
- 13.5.5 A hyperbaric lifeboat, with divers and crew on board, may weigh in excess of 24 tons. There are significant risks in attempting to lift the lifeboat vertically and it is unlikely that

vessels responding to the incident will have the appropriate equipment on board to do this safely. No attempt should ever be made to lift a hyperbaric lifeboat out of the water without full consultation and approval from the on-board LSS and/or DSV operator onshore.

- 13.5.6 The hyperbaric lifeboat will support the divers for 72 hours although the industry standard is to get the divers to a nominated safe haven where an additional LSP can be made available or to a hyperbaric reception facility. Various factors will influence the decision regarding where the lifeboat should make for or be taken to – location of incident, weather conditions etc. Unlike the majority of SAR incidents in which the coordinating MRCC will make the decision on where survivors or casualties will be taken to, in the hyperbaric lifeboat scenario the MRCC should be guided by the specialist knowledge of the DSV operator.
- 13.5.7 In general terms, self-propelled hyperbaric lifeboats are capable of a speed of between 5 to 6 knots in favourable sea conditions. There is, however, a trade off in that a higher speed will deplete the fuel tanks quicker. The engine also provides electrical power for on board facilities including aspects of the Life Support Package.
- 13.5.8 SPHLs are capable of being towed at speeds of up to 5 to 6 knots depending on weather conditions. Each SPHL is fitted with a towing wire which is secured to a towing point in the bow.
- 13.5.9 The length of time that the occupants of the SPHL will have to remain within the lifeboat is far greater than would be expected for a normal Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft (TEMPSC) on the UKCS. All of the occupants will be exposed to severe discomfort, including seasickness and dehydration – particularly the divers who do not have the option of opening a hatch if weather conditions allow. The effects of this must not be under-estimated.
- 13.5.10 Whether under its own power or assisted/towed by a support vessel, the SPHL will need assistance to get to a safe haven or to a Hyperbaric Reception Facility. The diving operator can provide further guidance on the most suitable support vessel, such as another DSV if available. If the SPHL requires to be towed, it will obviously need a suitable vessel to do the towing. In order to assist the towing operation and to allow for a reasonable towing speed which does not further impact on the condition of the occupants of the SPHL, another suitably sized and manoeuvrable vessel will be required to provide a lee if possible. If two SPHLs are involved, the requirement for support vessels also doubles.
- 13.5.11 Re-iterating that this is a Distress situation, the MRCC should request support from suitably equipped vessels by use of a MAYDAY relay. Time is of the essence and support from vessels under SOLAS should be sought at the outset. The DSV operator will be expected to provide additional support either from their own fleet or through shipbrokers but such assistance will take time to mobilise and reach the scene. Close co-operation between MRCC and DSV operator is essential particularly in determining where the SPHL should be taken to (Para 14.5.5).
- 13.5.12 On the Norwegian side of the North Sea, provision has been made for specialist Multi-role Rescue and Recovery Vessels which are capable of pulling a SPHL up the aft end of the vessel onto a ramp on the main deck. These vessels are fitted with Life Support Package facilities. Once the SPHL is safely onboard, the MRRV would make for the most suitable Hyperbaric Reception Facility. Three vessels are currently available – Stril Herkules, Stril Merkur and Havila Troll. Depending on the location of the incident, these vessels may make themselves available under SOLAS. In any case, contact should always be

established with JRCC Stavanger and options discussed. JRCC Stavanger will facilitate discussion with the offshore field centre within which the MRRV is operating. JRCC Stavanger will also be able to advise whether Norwegian Coastguard or Norwegian Navy vessels may be able to assist. Note, however, that the DSV Operator must always be party to any discussion surrounding this option, particularly as while these vessels carry LSPs, they do not always have the specific gas mixtures, consumables and support crew required and therefore these may have to be mobilised separately.



Figure 6 - Stril Herkules

Figure 7 - Stril Merkur

13.6 Evacuation by SPHL – Additional Factors to be Considered

- 13.6.1 Decompression of saturated divers requires close surveillance and accurate instrumentation. This is clearly impossible in the emergency situation that accompanies evacuation by SPHL and the divers in the SPHL will remain at the pressure under which they evacuated the DSV.
- 13.6.2 Thermal problems during a hyperbaric lifeboat evacuation produce further complexity. Saturation depth, the numbers of divers on board, insulation, surrounding air and sea temperature, will require heating or cooling systems on board the SPHL. The power for this is generated by the SPHL engine and failure or loss of this capacity will have a significant effect on the well-being of the divers.
- 13.6.3 The divers are entirely dependent on others to support them, primarily the nonpressurised crew on the SPHL. It is vitally important to understand that the non-pressurised crew will also be subject to sea-sickness, dehydration and fatigue. After a period of time, their decision-making capability will inevitably be adversely affected.
- 13.6.4 If replacements are available, provided by either the DSV Operator or by another DSV Operator, the SMC should consider the option of placing fresh personnel on board the SPHL. This remains a Distress situation and exceptional measures may be required. As with all caveats in this guidance, the SMC should be guided by the specialist knowledge of the DSV Operator.

13.7 Saturation Divers – Medevac from DSV

- 13.7.1 For all the reasons previously outlined in this chapter, normal Medevac procedures as outlined in Section 11.2.5 of IOER do not apply. There is no point in despatching a SAR helicopter if the diver cannot leave the diving chamber on board the vessel. The vessel or DSV Operator will likely seek specialist diving medical assistance through their own procedures and initial medical assistance will be provided to an injured or ill diver by other divers with medical training inside the diving chamber. Most modern DSVs are also equipped with telemedicine packages to receive remote medical support.
- 13.7.2 It may be possible for a trained doctor to be taken to the vessel. The doctor may be able to enter the chamber as it takes much less time to take someone “down” to the diver’s pressure than it does to bring someone “up”. Responsibility for sourcing a doctor lies with the DSV Operator. The MRCC may be able to assist with the logistics of getting the doctor to the DSV. As with all the SAR procedures in this Chapter, the MRCC must work very closely with the DSV Operator and be guided by their specialist knowledge.

13.8 Surface Divers

- 13.8.1 There is also surface diving which exists within the industry, where divers are not subject to saturation conditions.
- 13.8.2 Diving contractors will have dedicated evacuation plans for any surface diver who requires a medical evacuation e.g. due to decompression illness (DCI) – bend and HM Coastguard is well practiced at responding to incidents of this nature. In addition, it is most likely that the DSV would conduct the treatment given their legal responsibilities working with the oil and gas industry.
- 13.8.3 Therefore, there is no requirement for additional details outlined within this document.

Appendix A

What the CG Want to Know

As detailed in 8.1, it is important to recognise that the level of information required by HM Coastguard during the initial stages of an incident will vary depending on the nature and severity of the incident. The following details would be expected for most occasions and installations should endeavour to have this available, prior to calling HM Coastguard.

Who is calling? *Installation name though the job role of the caller can be useful*

Nature of the problem? *Layman's terms, nothing too complex, particularly initially.*

Confirmation of position? *Lat/Long, HMCG officers trained to ensure this is confirmed*

Location of incident? *Location on the installation. Often given as a module, but description of module required rather than numerical identification.*

Persons on Board?

What actions are the installation taking?

Emergency Phase? *Vital to have this confirmed before any SAR assistance is provided*

What assistance does the installation require from HMCG? *This will likely be quite generic though certain incidents may require a more specific requirement.*

Weather on-scene? *Hugely important to have actual, forecast and regularly updated weather*

Name and proximity of ERRV?

Aeronautical information? *Including helideck availability and rating, gravity or pressure fed fuel and quantity available, traffic and log frequencies. If a helideck is not available, explain why, may be useable by SAR*

Agree call back arrangements *Normally 10-15mins (every timeout) though may be longer for more protracted incidents*

Unique incident number passed. *Given by HMCG once incident created. To be used to confirm who HMCG are if they call installation back.*

Consideration should be given to the level of information being passed to HM Coastguard and be prepared for questions or clarification, particularly on technical detail. Further information will be required depending on the nature of the incident. This may include muster information, any injuries, plant status (i.e. shutdown/blowdown), additional resources in the area, other parties informed, descriptions (particularly for incidents such as MOB), any pollution, etc.

Care should also be taken regarding terminology and acronyms, ensuring information being given to and received by HMCG is fully understood. Any information not available at the time should be gathered and passed to the MRCC on a following call.

Appendix B

Police England and Wales boundaries



Appendix C

Offshore Emergency Response Working Group

Terms of Reference

- To explain roles & responsibilities in Offshore Emergency Response
- To review, analyse and improve Offshore Emergency Response
- To promote the concept of Integrated Offshore Emergency Response
- To act as the focal point for the development of Offshore Emergency Response Procedures
- To provide a forum for reviewing significant offshore incidents & promulgating lessons learned

Appendix D

HMCG Medevac Request

On completion of consultation with offshore and if a SAR response is required, make contact with **HM Coastguard immediately** to request assistance:

Medical Advice Doctor

(If the doctor goes off duty, new contact information must be provided to HM Coastguard)

- Name
- Company
- Contact Number

Installation / Vessel

- Name
- Contact Method

Patient information (if known):

- Age / DOB
- Name (not to be passed by radio)
- Gender and Nationality
- Time of onset of injury / illness
- Mechanism of Injury (if applicable)
- Injuries Suspected / Working diagnosis
- Signs & Symptoms
 - Heart Rate
 - Blood Pressure
 - Respiratory Rate
 - O2 saturation
 - Conscious level: GCS or AVPU
- Treatment administered
- Medical history (if relevant)
- Known additional risks for medevac
 - Able to don an immersion suit
 - Obese patient
 - Contagious condition
 - Altered mental status**

Evacuation timescale:(select one of the following only)

- Immediate
- As soon as practicable (within 6 hours)
- Within 12 hours
- Within 24 hours
- If symptoms worsens

Medical facility required: e.g. basic A&E, Major Trauma Centre, head injury, spine injury, etc.)

Once the receiving hospital is known, the medical advice doctor must notify the hospital providing all relevant information.

Other relevant information:

** If Altered Mental Status please confirm patient consent for:

- Transport in a stretcher

- Intravenous cannulation prior to transfer

Unless the clinical features require an “as soon as possible” medevac (e.g. suspected organic pathology), a Coastguard initiated telephone conference including the Topside doctor, SAR clinical advisor/crew and UK Rescue to discuss the medevac options and risk assessment should take place before the tasking is accepted.

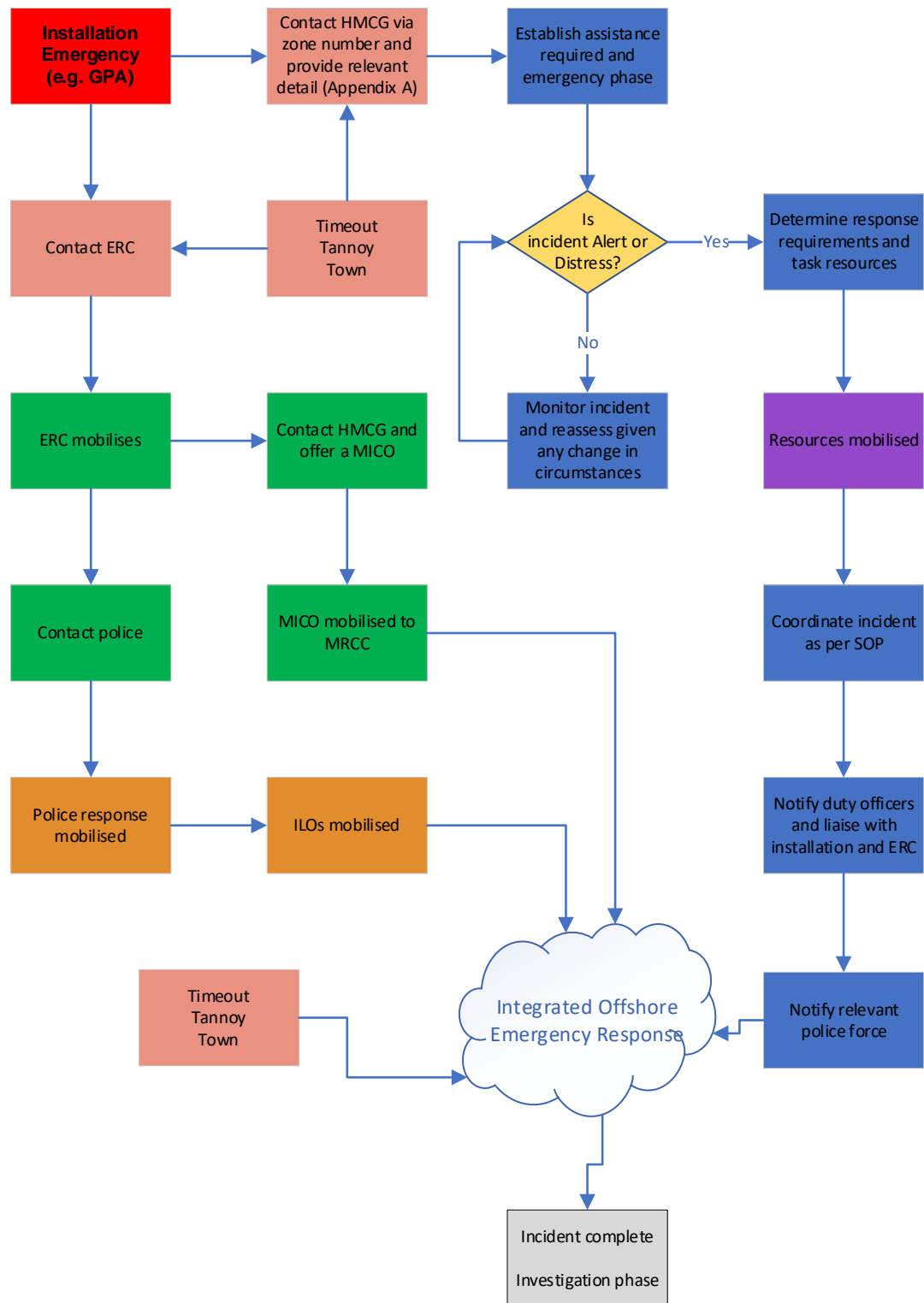
Appendix E

Glossary

AAIB	Air Accident Investigation Branch
ACO	Aircraft Coordinator
ADS-B	Automatic Dependant Surveillance - Broadcast
AHTS	Anchor Handling Tug Supply
AOC	Air Operators Certificate
ATSU	Air Traffic Services Unit
AVPU	Alert, Voice, Pain, Unresponsive
CAA	Civilian Aviation Authority
CAT	Civilian Air Transport
CNS	Central North Sea
CPSO	Counter Pollution and Salvage Officer
D&D	Distress and Diversion
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
DfT	Department for Transport
DSV	Dive Support Vessel
ERR	Emergency Response Room
EIS	East Irish Sea
EPOL	Emergency Preparedness Offshore Liaison
ERF	Emergency Restriction of Flying
ERRV	Emergency Response and Rescue Vessel
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
GCS	Glasgow Coma Score
HRF	Hyperbaric Rescue Facility (fHRF used for fixed and pHRF used for portable)
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
IAMSAR	International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
ILO	Incident Liaison Officer
IOER	Integrated Offshore Emergency Response
JRCC	Joint Rescue Coordination Centre
JRCC AR	JRCC Aeronautical Rescue
LRP	Local Resilience Partnership
LSP	Life Support Package
LSS	Life Support Supervisor
MAIB	Marine Accident Investigation Branch
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Medevac	Medical Evacuation
MICO	Maritime Incident Communication Officer
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre
MRRV	Multi-role Rescue and Recovery Vessel
NCP	National Contingency Plan
NNS	Northern North Sea
OERWG	Offshore Emergency Response Working Group
OIM	Offshore Installation Manager
OSC	Onscene Coordinator
OPRED	Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Energy and Decommissioning
PFEER	Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response Regulations 1995
POCC	Police Operations Control Centre
PSV	Platform Supply Vessel
RA(T)	Restricted Airspace (Temporary)
RNLI	Royal National Lifeboat Institution
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
RT	Radio Telephony
SAR	Search and Rescue
SIM	Senior Identification Manager
SIO	Senior Investigations Officer
SITREP	Situation Report
SMC	Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator
SNS	Southern North Sea
SOLAS	International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974
SoSRep	Secretary of State's Representative
SPHL	Self-Propelled Hyperbaric Lifeboat
SRU	Search and Rescue Unit
TEMPSC	Totally Enclosed Motor Propelled Survival Craft
TEZ	Temporary Exclusion Zone
TMAS	Telemedical Advice Service
UK SRR	United Kingdom Search and Rescue Region
UKCS	United Kingdom Continental Shelf
WAM	Wide Area Multilateralisation
WoS	West of Shetland

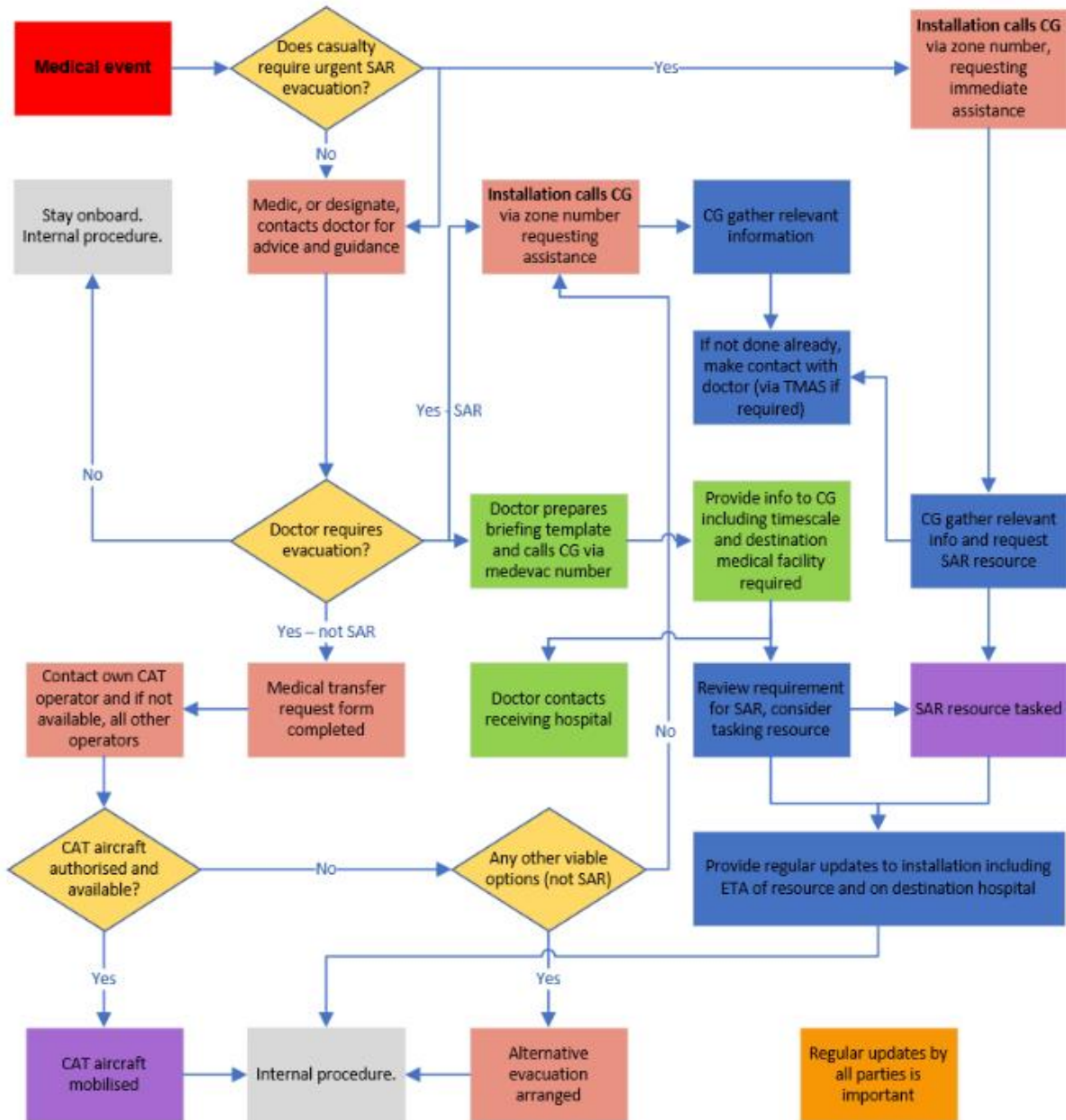
Appendix F Offshore Installation Emergency Initial Communication Flowchart



If any complications occur at any stage of an incident, a conference call should be arranged by the CG to include relevant parties. This may involve the JRCC, CG duty officers, installation, police, SAR crew and/or OELO. Any concerns, learnings or good practice established during an incident should be captured and provided to the OELO.

Appendix G

Medical Evacuation (Medevac) Flowchart



If any complications occur at any stage of a medevac, a conference call should be arranged by the CG to include relevant parties. This may involve the JRCC, doctor, medic, SAR crew, CAT medical advisor and/or OELO. Any concerns, learnings or good practice established during a medevac should be captured and provided to the OELO.