



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
35th session
Agenda item 6

STW 35/6
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LARGE PASSENGER SHIP SAFETY

Recommendations from COMSAR 7

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

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| <i>Executive summary:</i> | This document contains the recommendations made by COMSAR 7 and forwarded to the Sub-Committee for comments |
| <i>Action to be taken:</i> | Paragraph 3 |
| <i>Related documents:</i> | MSC 77/26, MSC 77/4, COMSAR 7/23 and COMSAR 7/10/1 |

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-seventh session (28 May to 6 June 2003), while considering the outcome of COMSAR 7, instructed the COMSAR, DE and STW Sub-Committees (MSC 77/26, paragraph 4.3) to consider the 35 recommendations made by COMSAR 7, which had been forwarded to the Committee for consideration, several of which addressed life-saving arrangement and training issues falling under the purview of the DE and STW Sub-Committees respectively, with a view to providing comments on those of them which fall within their purview and, in particular, to advise MSC 78 on what action ought to be taken in their context.

2 To assist the Sub-Committee in its deliberations, the text of the recommendations made by COMSAR 7 to MSC 77 is given at annex. Those recommendations which appear to be most relevant to the work of the Sub-Committee are in **bold**.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

3 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the above information and to take action as appropriate.

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ANNEX

**OUTCOME OF COMSAR 7
(EXTRACTS FROM MSC 77/4)**

4 In considering the report of the working group (COMSAR 7/WP.5), the Sub-Committee endorsed the correspondence group's recommendations, as contained in paragraphs 21.1 to 21.35 of document COMSAR 7/10/1, recognizing that these needed to be taken into account also by other relevant sub-committees involved in the work on large passenger ship safety, and agreed to refer them to MSC 77 for further consideration. In particular, the Committee was invited to endorse the recommendations and/or views that:

- .1 all large passenger ships, whatever their trade and type, be considered part of the large passenger ship safety project;
- .2 the MSC Working Group on Large Passenger Ship Safety be requested to add the human element and training to the tasks and objectives it had asked the COMSAR Sub-Committee to consider;**
- .3 the MSC Working Group on Large Passenger Ship Safety be requested to note that, although any measures it develops aimed at reducing the need for SAR service assistance to large passenger ships would be very welcome, SAR would remain a factor into the foreseeable future as a provider of on-board support and as a measure of last resort, and, therefore, ought to be planned for with due attention;
- .4 a 'large passenger ship', in COMSAR terms, be defined as 'one which, whether being evacuated or otherwise in need of SAR service assistance, presents a problem beyond the normal capacity of the local SAR services';
- .5 in view of the correspondence group's not having finished the work assigned to the Sub-Committee by the Committee, the Sub-Committee should consider what further work is required, both within its own remit and beyond;
- .6 the views expressed in response to the correspondence group's questionnaire should be considered, as should the possibility of extending its scope so as to enhance its statistical relevance worldwide and across all types of passenger shipping;
- .7 further work should be undertaken on the problem of how to transfer persons from survival craft and from the water into rescuing ships, by 'active' as well as 'passive' systems, considering in particular the general applicability of recovery systems required under SOLAS for ro-ro passenger ships to ships of all other types (including fishing vessels), taking cognisance of the experience of others, and, as regards 'means of rescue', encouraging the development of innovative, practical and functional designs. In this context, all ships should be enabled to rescue people in distress at sea – including those incapable of helping themselves – with due regard to the medical implications. It should be noted that, if the idea of recovering fully loaded survival craft was to be taken forward, considerable

extra work would be required to turn it into a practical proposition. In addition, the correspondence group's proposal that a functional requirement be developed for all ships to be able to actively recover persons at a rate to be determined by the Organization should be considered;

- .8 measures and techniques to transfer persons from survival craft and from the water into rescuing ships must be effective in any weather or sea state or at any time of day or year in which the passenger ship may be approved to operate, or as otherwise defined by the Organisation, and must be effective for all those who may be at risk;
- .9 the difficulty of SAR operations increases exponentially rather than linearly with the number of people at risk;
- .10 the lessons of the final report into the **Estonia** disaster, especially as regards recovery, should be reviewed in the context of large passenger ship safety;
- .11 it would be useful to distinguish in SOLAS between 'marine evacuation systems (MES)' designed for escape only and 'marine evacuation and rescue systems (MERS)' designed for both escape and rescue;
- .12 that even the best-equipped SAR services do not have dedicated SAR facilities enough to deal with thousands of people. In the worst case scenario, if a large passenger ship is evacuated or abandoned, the SAR services will be obliged to rely, to a greater or lesser extent, on additional facilities such as other shipping in the area – and all types of shipping will encounter difficulties when asked to take on this task;
- .13 **the levels of SAR training currently required for ships' crews is insufficient and that crews are unlikely to be able to practice safely in conditions similar to those they may face if involved in an actual operation;**
- .14 reliable links be established between relevant sub-committees to ensure an overall functional approach to the problem of evacuation, including the recovering people from survival craft or from the water, and to co-ordinate research projects so as to avoid a piecemeal approach to the industry;
- .15 the need for ships of all types to enhance their helicopter winching capabilities should be considered;
- .16 **ways should be sought to enhance safety in the use of life-saving appliances, particularly FRCs, both in actual incidents and during training;**
- .17 the lack of user confidence in some on-board escape and rescue systems and equipment, and in some cases in the reliability of shore-based SAR response, should be considered and, if current systems are agreed to be inadequate, further work should be undertaken on new concepts. Performance standards for survival craft and personal lifesaving appliances should be revised to meet the needs of varying climactic conditions;

- .18 the concerns expressed about evacuation systems should be forwarded to the DE Sub-Committee, with the request that, if new designs are being considered, due consideration be given to the problem of how to recover people from such systems once they have escaped the ship;
- .19 new concepts should be considered bearing in mind that, currently, no SAR service has the normal capacity to recover thousands of people. In this context, the provision of on-board support should be further considered with a view to enhancing this aspect of SAR service assistance worldwide (e.g. how the SAR services may best provide on-board support as an aid to incident containment as well as how to enhance their capability of doing so). The other new concepts suggested such as enhanced lifesaving 'modules', caches of equipment, Company emergency response centres, enhanced SAR co-operation and specific contingency planning between Company and SAR services, operator-resourced equipment in remote areas should also be considered further;
- .20 on-board plans for dealing with mass casualty incidents should be devised in advance and adapted to each specific ship;
- .21 the treatment of hypothermia should be reviewed and, if appropriate, revised guidelines should be developed by the Organisation;
- .22 medical experts should be invited to review the existing Volume III guidance on the debriefing of survivors for SAR information;
- .23 **wider adoption of the ICCL medical guidelines and the international standardisation of medical requirements should be considered. In particular, that: guidelines for the despatch of medical teams offshore, when circumstances require it, should be developed; medical training for ships' staff (including the debriefing of persons rescued for SAR information) should be reviewed; and shore-based medical advice systems should be reappraised;**
- .24 case study analyses should be encouraged as one means of informing the issues under discussion;
- .25 the common problems and crucial importance of good communication and proper co-ordination between those responding to major incidents should be considered with a view towards improvement;
- .26 the potential benefit of long-range polling and automatic identification systems for SAR co-ordination should be kept at the forefront of IMO's discussion of such systems;
- .27 appropriate guidance should be included in the IAMSAR Manual on the co-ordination of SAR, salvage and pollution containment operations, including the use of 'salvage' methods as an aid to traditional 'SAR';

- .28 further consideration should be given to the potential SAR problems associated with the operation of passenger ships in remote areas, including the development of fully co-ordinated contingency plans between the companies concerned and relevant SAR services;
 - .29 the earliest possible completion of the IMO SAR Plan should be encouraged;
 - .30 a model for conducting SAR assessments with regard to large passenger ship operation and trading patterns should be developed;
 - .31 the provision of further handheld radios for communication with survival craft should be considered;
 - .32 fitting marine band radio equipment on maritime SAR aircraft should be encouraged, and the carriage of air band equipment by ships reviewed;
 - .33 the problem of overworking key personnel, particularly senior personnel, in a major incident should be considered further;**
 - .34 cruise industry best practices should be considered for wider application; and
 - .35 the collation of relevant research projects, analyses, case studies and incident and exercise reports, to form a 'reference library' for possible further work, should be encouraged.
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