



LIFE LINE

The Newsletter of the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF)

News • Experience • Ideas • Information • Development

In this issue:

- A New Year message from our Chief Executive
- Firefighting and other specialist responses at sea
- News from the Mediterranean, Africa, China, the Baltic, and the IMO
- And more!

THE IMRF: TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

The IMRF exists for two primary purposes:

- advocacy, on behalf of the world's maritime search and rescue organisations; and
- mutual support – the sharing of information and ideas so as to improve maritime SAR and save lives worldwide.

In both cases we – the world's SAR community – are stronger together. We are stronger if we speak with one

voice on the literally vital issues that concern us, making sure that the continuing, and often needless, loss of life in the world's waters is kept high on the agenda. And we are stronger if we work together, and *share*.

In this edition of LIFE LINE you can read about some more of our ongoing advocacy work, particularly at the International Maritime Organization. But we are mostly focussing this time on some of the many ways in which IMRF Members share their experience and expertise, to the benefit of all.

In particular there's the work the IMRF is coordinating in support of our SAR colleagues in the Aegean (see page 4); international work on sharing maritime firefighting experience (see page 6); and our 'Members Assisting Members' resource, recently re-launched at www.international-maritime-rescue.org/home. Here you can request or offer help on any maritime SAR subject, wherever you are in the world – and you don't have to be an IMRF Member to do so!

Take a look inside...



Members Assisting Members



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MARITIME RESCUE

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of your newsletter.

As you will have seen from the front page, we are focussing on sharing in this edition. This is what the IMRF is for, to help people in maritime SAR to improve, to keep themselves safer and to save more lives. We – that is, the IMRF as a whole, including all our member organisations – have, between us, huge experience in SAR. It is to everyone's benefit to share it. And perhaps it is our moral duty too.

This is especially so when it comes to start-up and small-scale SAR organisations. Some need help in getting under way; advice and training as well as funding and equipment. Others, already operating, may need replacement gear, or assistance to help them to expand to meet the need. IMRF Trustee Jorge Diena has wise words to say on this subject: see page 9.

The IMRF developed the 'Members Assisting Members' tool to help smaller organisations in this way. Please have a look at www.international-maritime-rescue.org/home, and consider how you might be able to help. Gear that no longer meets your organisation's requirements may still be of great help somewhere else in the world – and your organisation's particular experience or areas of expertise may be readily transferable to others.

That's true for all of us. As the IMRF's Crew Exchange shows (see our December 2015 edition, available in the newsletter archive at www.international-maritime-rescue.org), even the most developed SAR organisations can learn from each other. The same goes for our Mass Rescue Operations project, in which IMRF member organisations of all types and sizes share experience and ideas. The Maritime Incident Response Group is just one of these ideas: see page 6.

Being an IMRF Member has other sharing benefits too. Don't forget our Associate Member Dacon's generous discount offers on rescue equipment, for example – see the December 2015 LIFE LINE – and remember that you can claim a 20% discount in our online bookshop: see www.imrfbookshop.org.

Finally there's the website, and this newsletter itself, where you can read about others' news, ideas and experiences – and share your own. As someone once said: "A burden shared is a burden halved"!

Dave Jardine-Smith
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DATES FOR THE DIARY

see also page 12

SAR EXPO International

1 to 3 March 2016 Cannes, France
see sarexpo.com

Passenger Ship Safety Conference

12-13 April 2016 Southampton, UK
see passengershipsafety.com

Ferry Safety & Technology Conference

14-15 April 2016 New York City, USA
see ferrysafetyconference.squarespace.com

Singapore Maritime Week

17-22 April 2016 Singapore
see smw.sg

Australian & New Zealand Disaster, Emergency Management & SAR Conferences

30 May - 1 June 2016 Jupiters Gold Coast, Australia
see anzdmc.com.au and sar.anzdmc.com.au

SAR Europe Conference, plus Arctic rescue & survival training workshops

7-8 & 9 June 2016 Copenhagen, Denmark
see searchandrescueeurope.com

Maritime SAR Conference

21-22 June 2016 Helsinki, Finland
see maritime-sar.com

ISAR 5th International SAR Conference

19-21 July 2016 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
see globalsar.com.my

IMRF Crew Exchange 2016

24 September - 1 October 2016
for more information email info@imrf.org.uk

ICE-SAR Rescue 2016

14-16 October 2016 Reykjavik, Iceland
see rescue.is/conference

If you are planning a SAR event of international interest which you would like to see listed here, please send the details to news@imrf.org.uk

Happy New Year from the CEO

IMRF's Chief Executive Officer
Bruce Reid writes:



Let me begin by wishing you all a very happy and successful New Year: successful in all you do, but in SAR especially!

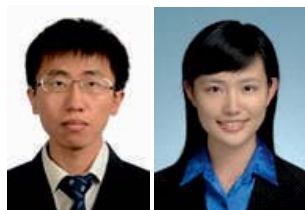
When I wrote a summary of the IMRF's many activities in 2015 in the December LIFE LINE (see the archive on our website), I noted that it had been quite a year, and that we hope to continue to achieve great things in 2016. Now here we are at the end of January already – and I can tell you that we are up and running!

As this edition of LIFE LINE heads for the press I am in China, for the meeting of the Board governing our Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (APRC). I'm delighted to say that the APRC continues to go from strength to strength. For this year we are planning Mass Rescue Workshops and Seminars in Malaysia and Mongolia too. There will be a Regional SAR Development Meeting in September and the APRC will be working with the Maritime Universities in Shanghai and Dalian to develop case studies on two MRO accidents. Increased cooperation with the Chinese Government will provide even more opportunities to build activity in the Region.

The APRC's success is a tribute to its hardworking staff, under the leadership of Mr Zhang Rongjun. Mr Gu Yiming and Ms Qiu Jing have done us great service – and both are now moving on to other things in their parent organisation, IMRF Member China Rescue and Salvage. Thank you, guys: everyone in the IMRF wishes you all the very best for the future.



So – the old crew have paid off: let's welcome the new crowd! Mr Zeng Haowei and Ms Qin Huapu are now aboard. It's very good to have you with us.



We've been planning our new year back in the UK offices too. We will be building on our small team, with a fundraiser and an additional staff member to help manage the increasing workload and provide another point of contact for our Members.

Stalwarts Jill, Dave & Wendy are hard at work again after a well-deserved Christmas break; and already it's clear that we have a full schedule mapped out for 2016. SAR seems to be at the forefront of many people's attention now, and quite a few events are already on the calendar (see pages 2 & 12).



We are celebrating 'sharing' in this issue of LIFE LINE, and sharing our global SAR needs as well as our successes raises awareness, and helps deliver on our shared humanitarian goal of preventing loss of life in the world's waters. But we do have to be hard-headed about our resources (especially our human resource) and the increasing demands on us. It's great that the IMRF is now well-recognised as a leading voice and force for SAR worldwide; but that does mean that more and more people are asking for our help! We have to prioritise.

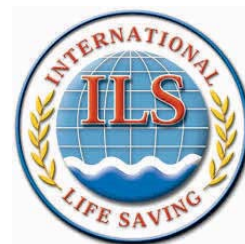
We will aim to run a major IMRF SAR conference every second year. The World Maritime Rescue Congress is one: we will be announcing the venue for the 2019 Congress very soon. Our plan now is to hold a second conference in mid-term, between Congresses; so the next will happen in 2017. We will consider continuing the mass rescue theme, developed in the successful Gothenburg series of conferences over the last few years; but we want to cover other subjects of importance to the worldwide SAR community too.

The rest of our work continues: at the IMO (see page 5); mass rescue workshops; the highly successful Crew Exchange (visit www.imrfexchange.org); ongoing development work in Africa (see page 9) and elsewhere; and 'new' work too, on technological developments and accident prevention strategies. Watch for more news of these in future editions of LIFE LINE.

Finally, the IMRF Members Assisting Members initiative is being taken to another level with more than ten IMRF member organisations actively working together to help Greek authorities with the continuing flood of people crossing the Aegean Sea. You can read more about this major initiative on page 4.

Yes – it's going to be another of those years! Come along with us: it will be good!

Drowning prevention strategies



Our partner organisation the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) has published the third edition of their *Drowning Prevention Strategies: a framework to reduce drowning deaths in the aquatic environment for nations/regions engaged in lifesaving*

The document reviews strategies that have been introduced by ILS member federations with well-developed lifesaving practices. The aim is to share this experience so that programmes developed in one country can save lives in another.

The document may be freely downloaded from www.ilsf.org/drowning-prevention/library/ils-drowning-prevention-strategies-2015.

The IMRF in the Aegean

The bad news from the Mediterranean – and the Aegean in particular – continues. “12 Dead, More Missing After Boat Capsizes”; “Migrant Boat Sinks: Nine Children Among Dead”... Over a million people crossed the Mediterranean ‘irregularly’ in 2015: thousands died attempting it. This year, to 29 January, the International Organization for Migration reports that 52,055 have crossed to Greece and 3,473 to Italy: at least 244 more have died.

We can become inured to bad news. It batters us relentlessly; and perhaps there is a weary feeling of ‘That’s terribly sad – but what can I do...?’ Then something happens to make it all immediate again.

An email arrived in the IMRF’s UK office: “This morning our boats were called out very urgently just after 0600. The report was of people in the water 5-6 nm NW of Vahti harbour. Arriving on scene the area was full of debris: life-vests and wooden and plastic boat parts. In the debris the boats picked up three boys aged 9 or 10. They had drowned. The Hellenic Coast Guard managed to pick up some survivors minutes earlier. How many are lost one can only imagine. It was yet another catastrophe while we were sleeping safe. The night was beautiful: calm, clear and the moon bright; all almost poetically beautiful – and then this horrible accident.” And later: “16 dead and only 9 survivors so far. Still searching...” After a search lasting 12 hours another 10 bodies had been found.

“Rescue services and the people on the islands in the area are exhausted,” says IMRF CEO Bruce Reid. “They need help – which is being provided in the form of additional people and equipment, and support with coordinating the many willing responders. Short-term our Members and other NGOs are helping out operationally. However the IMRF has also developed a plan to help build SAR capability in Greece. We welcome Andreas Arvidsson of the Swedish Sea Rescue Society (SSRS) to the IMRF team to manage our Mixed Migrant Safety Project. It’s a big job and one Andreas is well equipped to make a success.”

It was Andreas who sent the email. “Today affected me very deeply,” he wrote. “I share this with you to once again underline the importance of our efforts made in this area.”



For let us be clear: there is good news too, across the Mediterranean: “Swedish volunteers rescue 1000 refugees”; “More than 1,200 boat migrants rescued off Libya on Tuesday”; “Romanian border police rescue 119 migrants in the Mediterranean”.

There is good news from IMRF Members the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), for example, now active in the Aegean, having saved more than 12,000 lives in the Central Mediterranean since 2014. In 2015 an outpouring of public support allowed MOAS to become a global NGO providing SAR services where they are needed most. The www.international-maritime-rescue.org

area of current operation was determined after discussions with the Greek authorities. But the work is very tough. “Nothing can prepare you for the horrific reality of what is going on,” says Christopher Catrambone, MOAS’s co-founder: see www.international-maritime-rescue.org/10-news/1837-moas-rescues-shipwrecked-syrians-on-greek-island-of-agathonisi.

As another example the SSRS have two rescue boats operational on the Greek island of Samos, in an initiative launched with media company Schibsted and funded by individuals and businesses. “For us, rescue has no boundaries, no one should have to die at sea. It was natural for us to help when we had the chance. It is fantastic to see that our effort has already saved many lives”, says Rolf Westerström, SSRS CEO.

But the work is tough for everyone engaged. The world was horrified by the picture of 3-year-old Alan Kurdi’s body being recovered from a beach by a Turkish policeman last autumn – but SAR people everywhere will have seen the look on the policeman’s face, and our hearts went out to him. For a feel of what SAR means in these circumstances, visit <http://thecoastofthedead.story.aftonbladet.se/#1> – and do not fail to click on the video that begins with this picture.



The IMRF’s project in the Aegean is fully coordinated with the Hellenic Coast Guard, the SAR Authority most deeply concerned. There is also extensive collaboration with other aid agencies and organisations on scene: in particular, IMRF Members the Hellenic Rescue Team. “We will continue to collaborate closely with local organizations to exchange knowledge and experience for their future work,” says Andreas. Watch LIFE LINE for updates.

Bruce Reid adds: “IMRF’s thanks go out to our Members who have committed to these initiatives – SSRS, the Norwegian Society for Sea Rescue (RS), the German Maritime SAR Service (DGzRS), the Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Institution (KNRM), and Britain and Ireland’s Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) – and to the individuals and organisations who are providing financial support. I am sure that through open dialogue, sharing and a coordinated approach we will make a difference, and more lives will be saved: not just now but for years to come.”

Comparing good practices

A useful investigation of comparative recruitment, training and management practices in volunteer marine rescue organisations is available for free download from the Churchill Trust: see www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellows/detail/3877/David+Bacchus.

The report is the work of David Bacchus, a Search Mission Controller with South Australia Police, and comprises his study of maritime SAR organisations in the USA, Canada, the UK and France.

SAR MATTERS

This column provides a forum for LIFE LINE readers worldwide to contribute to debate on any SAR issue. Have a look at previous discussions in our Newsletter Archive, online at www.international-maritime-rescue.org: every LIFE LINE since 2010 is available there for free download. You can join in the debate by emailing news@imrf.org.uk. It's good to talk!

In this edition we consider some of the international legislation underpinning SAR.

Migrant rescue at sea: the legal context

The ongoing migrant crisis across the Mediterranean region continues to cause huge humanitarian, border control, and maritime SAR challenges. The plight of hundreds of thousands of people risking their lives in sea crossings to escape war, abuse or poverty has aroused strong responses, from people wanting to help the displaced, and people wanting to stem the tide. According to news reports it also seems to have confused some would-be rescuers, uncertain of their legal position. Let's set the record straight.

The IMRF, coordinating the work of its SAR organisation members in support of the relevant SAR authorities in the region (see page 4), has noted with concern recent reports that some would-be rescuers may have been deterred from helping people in distress because they are worried about possible legal action by local authorities seeking to counter trafficking activity.

Such concerns are misplaced. International maritime law in respect of rescue at sea is clear.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS – Article 98) and the International Maritime Organization's Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS – Chapter V Regulation 33) all vessels at sea – with certain very specific exceptions such as warships, which are nevertheless encouraged to comply – must try to rescue people in distress if it is reasonably safe for them to do so.

'Distress' is defined in common-sense terms in the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue. People should be considered in need of rescue if "there is a reasonable certainty that [they are] threatened by grave and imminent danger". The SAR Convention also requires States which are Parties to it to establish SAR services and to assist in rescue, including enabling vessels to land rescued people at places of safety. Anyone involved in SAR at sea should report to the relevant Rescue Coordination Centre, who will help them as necessary.

It is important to recognise that the rescue of people in distress is a duty placed on nearly everyone at sea. It applies whether in territorial or international waters, and regardless of the legal status of the people in distress or the circumstances in which they are found.

It is also important to emphasise that we are talking here about people who will die if not rescued. This is different to highly important but less immediately urgent humanitarian responses, where lives are not imminently at risk. And it is different to border control issues, too. SAR takes place within that broader context, of course – and the IMRF understands that the overall situation is complex. But SAR is simple in principle, and its procedures are established in international law. If people are in distress at sea they must be rescued if possible, and 'rescue' includes being brought to a place of safety.

The IMRF urges all concerned to find solutions to the wider issues, and to enable the maritime SAR services to do their lifesaving work.

UPCOMING ISSUES AT THE IMO

The International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications, and Search and Rescue (NCSR) will meet 29 February to 4 March in London. The IMRF has consultative status at the IMO, and NCSR is the technical sub-committee of most interest to us in our advocacy role, speaking on behalf of maritime SAR people worldwide.

We are co-sponsoring two papers at this session, both on issues led by our colleagues in Finland. The first suggests a way forward on making necessary improvements in SAR cooperation planning with cruise ships. This is all about information-sharing between passenger ships and SAR authorities, aimed at improved mutual awareness and cooperation in the event of an incident. Establishing good liaison between SAR services and cruise ships trading through many SAR regions is difficult, and we are seeking ways of improving the process.

The second paper asks SAR authorities to trial Finland's Vessel Triage system, a concept we believe to be of use in mass rescue situations in particular. See LIFE LINE October 2014 (in the newsletter archive on our website), and visit www.raja.fi/tietoa/vesseltrriage for more information.

Among other issues of interest to IMRF Members will be those resulting from the report to NCSR of last September's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) / IMO Joint Working Group on SAR (see the October 2015 edition of LIFE LINE). The IMRF is closely engaged with the Joint Working Group, and has a part in several items of work on its agenda.

ICAO's new Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS) will be introduced at the NCSR meeting. While this is mostly to do with aircraft tracking, in response to the MH370 disaster, it does offer the opportunity for improved maritime/aeronautical liaison in pursuit of better SAR provision.

For further information about the upcoming meeting please contact info@imrf.org.uk. A report of its proceedings will be included in the April edition of LIFE LINE.

FIRE IN THE GALLEY...

Fire down below:

It's fetch a bucket of water, boys,

There's fire down below...

So goes the old song. It's sung to rather a jolly tune, but it refers to one of the seafarer's greatest fears: fire at sea.

The non-seafarer may find this fear illogical – the ship is surrounded by water, after all – but seafarers, and firefighters with experience of shipboard firefighting, know that the fear is very well-justified. Vessels at sea, whether big ships or small craft, tend to be filled with combustible materials, sometimes in highly toxic combinations; and heat rises. No-one wants to fight a fire from above, but often, at sea, there is little choice. And the situation is exacerbated if the fire becomes general: there is nowhere to escape to but over the side. 60 people discovered this when the tourist boat *Peejay* caught fire off Whakatane, New Zealand, on 18 January, for example.



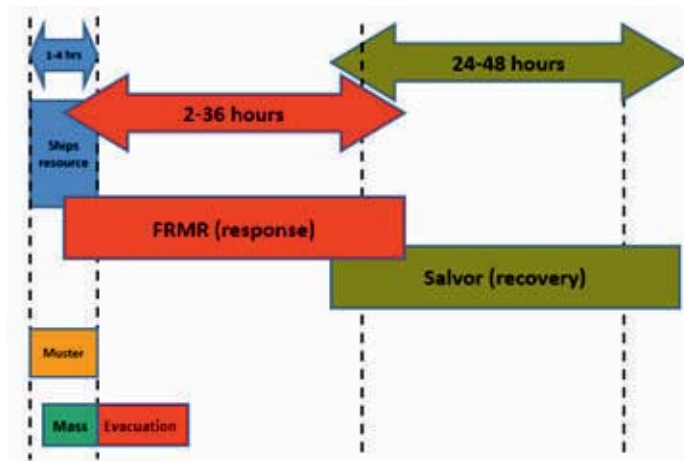
Firefighting at sea is a specialist activity, and big ships' crews are trained in it. But they will be the first to admit that they are not professional firefighters – and professional firefighters agree that working on incidents at sea is a specialist activity for them too. It requires specific training and equipment – including the necessary extra training and equipment needed for the offshore transfer, by helicopter or boat, and to support their on-board safety.

A number of fire services around the world have studied the problem and have developed sophisticated maritime response capabilities as a result. In most cases they are able to bring skills to the party that go beyond firefighting: chemical hazard response, for example, or technical on-board rescue capabilities. This multi-tasking capability has led to the specialist teams often being known as 'Maritime Incident Response Groups'.

The availability of such a resource for SAR use, as opposed to salvage, is a very useful aid, especially in mass rescue operations. Readers familiar with the IMRF's mass rescue operations guidance (see www.international-maritime-rescue.org/homemropublic) will be aware that we regard

www.international-maritime-rescue.org

the provision of on-scene support, to help extend the time available for rescue, as one of the means of overcoming the problem of having insufficient resources to rescue everyone in time. Professional fire teams can be deployed to assist ships' staff, thereby 'buying time' for the evacuation of passengers, say – or, hopefully, removing the need for it altogether.



As we also note in our guidance material, it is useful to consider blurring the line between SAR and the commercial activity of salvage. Salvaging a ship can be a means of 'rescuing' people able to remain aboard her.

Maritime Incident Response Groups are not an alternative to the extensive firefighting and other assistance capabilities of salvors. As the diagram kindly provided by the UK's Fire & Rescue Marine Response unit shows, fire teams are intended to be deployed as a SAR aid before salvage companies can swing into action. These teams are shore-based, so cannot arrive on board immediately: the ship's crew's initial responses remain as vital as ever. When they do arrive, however, their expertise will be of very considerable help to the Master in his further decision-making and action.

Now, linked to our resources to help with planning for mass rescue operations, the IMRF has developed a new website for sharing Maritime Incident Response Group information.



The website – imrfmimg.org – is designed to provide a user-friendly link to knowledge, information, initiatives and contacts. It contains a library of MIRG documents and files for public use, to which you may submit your own material. There is also a blog, and if you register (for free!) you can join the site's forum. Share and learn: it's good to talk!

There are also links to other useful sites – including the Baltic Sea Maritime Incident Response Group Project: see

below – and you can read the latest news on the subject, and submit news items of your own.

We will continue to build on the information available, and we encourage organisations and individuals working in this field to be proactive in sending us content.

Questions or suggestions? Please visit the site, or email info@imrf.org.uk.



MIRG IN THE BALTIC SEA

Raita Putkonen of IMRF Members the Finnish Border Guard writes:



'MIRG' (the Maritime Incident Response Group) is a term used internationally to refer to specially trained and equipped rescue teams that can be used to support the crew's emergency response efforts during incidents on ships at sea. The most typical MIRG operations are assisting with dealing with ship fires or chemical hazards, but MIRG units may also be called on to handle a variety of damage prevention tasks, evacuation support, or medical first aid tasks.

The Baltic Sea MIRG project, led by the Finnish Border Guard, is currently ongoing in Europe. It has the aim of developing shared coordination and operating models for MIRG teams in Baltic region countries. Shared models would boost operational efficiency and improve occupational safety during serious maritime incidents requiring input from different countries. The Baltic Sea MIRG project is also collating existing MIRG training programmes and supporting the harmonisation of MIRG services across Europe.

The project began on 1 December 2014 and will run to 31 December 2016. It involves cooperation with representatives of maritime search and rescue and emergency services from countries providing or developing MIRG services.

More information is available at www.raja.fi/MIRG.

www.international-maritime-rescue.org

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, SIR?



Dave Sheppard, of IMRF Member Fire and Rescue Marine Response, is kindly looking after our new MIRG website – imrfmirmg.org. Here's his first blog, just to get you interested! Log on and join in...

'Would you like some external assistance, sir?' is a question that poses a number of difficulties for the Master of a vessel at sea with a problem. The answer depends on a number of factors and priorities which must be considered in a very dynamic and challenging environment. The Master, however comfortable with his or her usual decision-making process, will be under significant new pressures which may undermine their usual thought processes.

First, and it should always be the highest priority, must be a decision about whether the external assistance offered can help in saving the lives of those on the vessel. *'The safety of those involved in an emergency remains the chief priority at all times. If a ship remains habitable following an emergency, the SAR Authorities and others concerned should seek to provide support as an aid to containing the emergency and specifically to reduce the need for evacuation,'* says the IMO guidance (MSC Circular 1183 – available on the IMRF website at www.international-maritime-rescue.org/index.php/homeimo). To assist in making this decision the Master has to know whether or not their current plan is working and is likely to be successful. Ultimately, if the Master decides to abandon the vessel, is there sufficient time to complete the evacuation of all passengers and crew or could external assistance provide the extra time needed by containing or slowing down the development of the emergency?

Second, what external assistance is available? MSC Circular 1183 sets out a range of potential external assistance options that might be considered. But there is no obligation on any SAR Authority to provide such services, so where will they come from? The external assistance has to be able to 'add value' to the operational plan on board the vessel for a range of emergencies that might be encountered, but it also has to be commercially viable when inactive. The use of specialist knowledge and experience from personnel whose day job is dealing with the type of emergency encountered must be able to deliver a better resolution over and above that which the ship's crew are trained to provide (which is in addition to maintaining their own job-related competency). It should be able to build on the good work already undertaken by the ship's crew so some synergy between STCW standards (set by the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers) and the external assistance

capability is essential. But the challenge will still remain of who will be paying for capabilities that are essentially mitigating risk, and who owns that risk?

Thirdly, and undoubtedly a consideration for owners and insurers, is what will be the status of the assistance when it boards the vessel in terms of the payment for any services provided and possible involvement of commercial salvage rights? The external assistance, in my opinion, has to have a very clear role within the resolution of the incident. Within the UK Fire & Rescue Marine Response capability, for example, there is a defined window within which we will operate which is the gap between where the ship's crew might become overwhelmed or exhausted (1-4 hours) and the time when a commercial salvor might be engaged (24-48 hours). This window still supports the aim of saving lives and protecting the environment as the incident can still be escalating or posing a threat to either lives or the environment, but it also distinguishes what we do from the role of the commercial salvage sector with whom we have no intention of competing. Indeed, where an incident develops to requiring a commercial salvor to become engaged we would see ourselves as actively supporting the transition and handover.

Emergency responders, who routinely make decisions within dynamically changing scenarios and with high risk factors, can support the Master in maintaining their position as the ultimate decision-maker on the vessel and also provide professional, independent advice to those coordinating any response onshore.

Perhaps the question should be 'Why *wouldn't* you accept some external assistance, sir...?'

FIRE ON THE *ELBETOR* – A CASE STUDY

This wasn't a mass rescue operation – but a fire aboard the coaster *Elbetor* recently provided a good example of what a Maritime Incident Response Group can do. Dave Sheppard tells the story.

Firefighters from the United Kingdom's Fire & Rescue Marine Response (FRMR) capability were deployed to assist the Master of the MV *Elbetor* following a significant fire in the accommodation block of the vessel in the early hours of 13th January 2016. The vessel, an 87m Antigua and Barbuda flagged general cargo vessel, was heading from Kings Lynn (UK) to Rotterdam (Netherlands) with a cargo of grain when the fire started approximately 5 miles off Cromer, Norfolk.

On becoming aware of the fire the Master quickly tasked his crew to fight it, which they did with some success although they were unable to completely extinguish it due



to the excessive heat and smoke-logging within the accommodation block. A mayday message was broadcast which the Coastguard Operations Centre at Humberside (CGOC – the local Rescue Coordination Centre) received. A request for external assistance to support firefighting operations was confirmed.

The CGOC quickly deployed a SAR helicopter from Humberside and the Cromer Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) lifeboat to safeguard the crew should they need to abandon the vessel. The CGOC also contacted the newly established Fire & Rescue Marine Response Coordination Centre, which was introduced by UK Fire & Rescue Services on 1 January 2016 to provide an enhanced level of coordination and interoperability between Fire & Rescue Services providing assistance to vessels on fire at sea and alongside. Following the agreed tasking process a decision was made to deploy two teams of six firefighters to the vessel from Humberside Fire & Rescue Service, one of the designated specialist teams strategically located around the UK coastline.

The fire teams are primarily deployed using airborne assets so a second SAR helicopter from Caernarvon in Wales was tasked to collect the teams and winch them onto the vessel. On arriving at the vessel the firefighters confirmed that external assistance was still required prior to boarding and supported the Master in dealing with the fire. The fire crews, with their enhanced knowledge and experience of firefighting, were able to commit firefighters in breathing apparatus more deeply into the accommodation block, locate the source of the fire (which was subsequently extinguished) and then worked to clear the extensive smoke-logging.

Once the fire had been extinguished and the smoke cleared the firefighters were able to leave the vessel and were transferred to the RNLI lifeboat which brought them back ashore. *Elbetor* remained at anchor overnight then was moved to Great Yarmouth where, following a final inspection at sea, it was brought alongside to be met by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency and Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service.

The fact that despite a significant fire developing no crew were injured, that the vessel maintained its integrity and that there was no environmental damage caused would seem to indicate that this multi-agency response involving

the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Her Majesty's Coastguard, Bristow SAR helicopters, the RNLI and Fire & Rescue Marine Response was successful in helping to satisfactorily resolve the incident.

The FRMR capability provides for a range of assistance requests including confirmed fires, smaller assessment teams, technical rescue, chemical incident and an underwater search & recovery team. It utilises specialist teams of firefighters from around the UK who are able to work together to provide assistance, on request, to vessels at sea. For further information please contact the UK FRMR National Coordinator Dave Sheppard at dave.sheppard@esfrs.org.



photo credits: (above) Chris Key, RNLI Cromer, (page 8) Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

TO BELONG...

As you can see from other articles in this newsletter and on our website, the IMRF is involved in many of today's biggest SAR challenges, such as the ongoing disaster in the Mediterranean, and we count some of the world's largest SAR organisations among our members. But the IMRF exists to promote maritime SAR in all parts of the world, and we are particularly keen to support small and start-up SAR organisations, who often work far from the media spotlight. Far too many people are drowning in the Mediterranean – but far, far too many people are dying in other places too. Those trying to save them can be, and can feel, forgotten. The IMRF wants to make sure that doesn't happen and – in the spirit of sharing – our large member organisations want to help their smaller partners. Which is largely what the IMRF is for.

IMRF Trustee Jorge Diena knows the importance of IMRF membership for the smaller SAR organisations. He writes:

As many of you know, I am a volunteer member of a small lifeboat organization in Uruguay. In this article I want to share with you the feeling many new and small organizations have, when they join the big and growing IMRF family. For many organizations that have been with the IMRF (or its predecessor, the ILF) from the beginning it is unthinkable not to be part of the Federation, but for the new and small ones it is often a dream come true.

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When these organizations are allowed to be members of the IMRF, it means that the service they provide or seek to provide is recognized internationally and by their peers. IMRF membership confers status in their own society, and a powerful feeling of mutual support; that all the efforts made to build up and maintain their organization are finally bearing fruit.

One of the nicest moments I have as the IMRF Regional Coordinator for South America is when I present the IMRF plaque to the new member organizations in this area. The plaque is something tangible that constitutes their acceptance as part of the IMRF, and the duties and obligations that come with it. A whole new world opens to them! To have the possibility to learn from others, to share their own experience, to see that there is an impressive pool of knowledge out there, just an email away, is only a part of it. The sense of belonging, and the pride that comes with having the IMRF plaque hanging in a prominent area of their rescue station, to be seen by their peers, is something I have witnessed in many organizations. I find it very difficult to express in words, but that sense of belonging – which may seem a little strange to colleagues in large member organizations – is of really great importance.

Some weeks ago I had the opportunity to hand over the IMRF plaque to our friends from ADES Venezuela (Asociación Voluntaria de Salvamento Acuático: the Volunteer Water Rescue Association of Venezuela – see <https://twitter.com/adesvenezuela>), who have been members of the IMRF but could not travel outside their country. In the picture you can see Mr. William Pelaez from ADES Venezuela (left) receiving the plaque. He kindly presented me with their cap and tee-shirt in return. It was a very nice moment and the enthusiasm William had was impressive, talking about their plans and the way they are working with the local authorities.

To belong to the IMRF more often than not makes the difference in the service the smaller rescue institutions provide, with better and safer rescues. We welcome ADES Venezuela to the IMRF family, and we invite others to join us too. Make your dream come true!

THE IMRF IN AFRICA

Working with the Technical Cooperation Division of the IMO and IMRF Trustee Mohammed Drissi, the SAR Coordinator for Morocco and regional coordinator for North & West Africa, the IMRF Secretariat has put together a programme of proposed SAR development activity for 2016.

We intend to build on the activity of the past three years and maintain the momentum developed in African SAR, whenever possible including representatives of several States and regions in joint training. We also intend to increase the number of on-site training opportunities delivered by trainers who have come through the Morocco and DGzRS (German Maritime SAR Service) RCC programmes. This is a cost-effective way of delivering training that would previously have required bringing trainees to a central location. It has the added bonus of training people on the equipment they have in their own Coordination Centre.

The training programme includes basic and advanced on-scene and SAR mission coordination, including a course delivered in French; SAR administration; and a practical mass rescue exercise and conference. There will also be regional and inter-regional meetings, to discuss issues such as the safety of artisanal fishermen as well as SAR.

We are seeking the funding necessary to complete this vital work. If you want to help, please email us at info@imrf.org.uk

A LIBERIAN ON RÖRÖ

Sharing is our focus in this issue of LIFE LINE. Here is a fine example. Emmanuel Mezoh Dolakeh is studying Maritime Safety & Environmental Administration at the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden. IMRF Members the Swedish Sea Rescue Society (SSRS) invited him to spend some time at their rescue station on the island of Rörö: a voluntary station with a fast 16 metre rescue cruiser, *Märta Collin*, and an 8 metre rescue boat, *Marianne Bratt*. The station also has some small rescue runners.



Emmanuel takes up the story:

I must first of all acknowledge the way in which I was welcomed and accommodated on Rörö Island. I very much appreciate the hospitality accorded me by the SSRS family.

The one-week visit in itself was indeed a rewarding learning involvement that will linger in my heart forever. For me, there are three outcomes from the visit: the power of volunteerism that drives SSRS, boating, and sightseeing!

This is especially true for volunteerism as the visit was much more people-centered than I had earlier anticipated, being surrounded with big-screened communications equipment. Then I realized through my interaction with the SSRS personnel that it is not only the fascinating technology that moves an organization but the committed people who are the driving force behind its success. SSRS staff and volunteers come from all sorts of background and disciplines, yet they are able to effectively and efficiently gel their various knowledge and skills to achieving a single target, which is preventing loss of life in Sweden's waters. I was particularly struck by this powerful message that everyone in a society can and should delegate his/her free time in doing some sort of voluntary work for the good and benefit of the society. And I must admit that it has moved me in a motivating way to start some volunteerism work back home upon my return.

Going out on the boats was kind of new for me. Though I had sailed on a much larger ocean-going vessel, I have not had the experience of cruising in an open boat. This was indeed fascinating. Also, the boats were all integrated with navigational equipment which gave me a closer picture, again for the first time, of how they work.

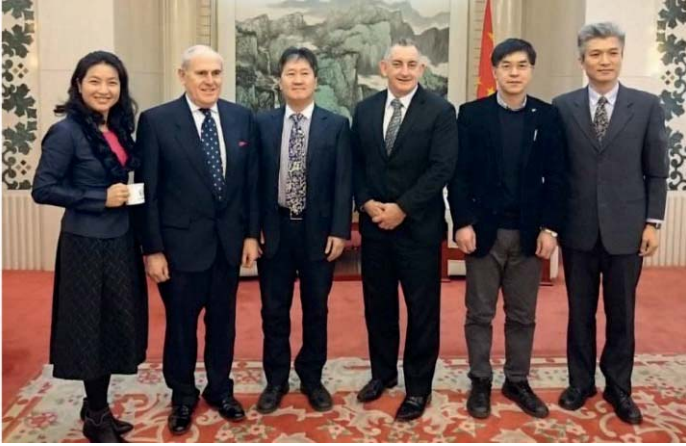
As my job (with the Liberia Maritime Authority) transitions from one that is highly technical to one that is more managerial, the education and new experience which have been and will be acquired here in Sweden will go a long way in helping me on the job as well as shaping my vision for my local society.

I really enjoyed my stay with the crew at Rörö Station. I thank you all once again and would be glad to stay in touch with all the new connections this visit has provided me.

China: strengthening support to benefit Asia-Pacific SAR

A clear and crisp Beijing afternoon: - 5° outside the China Ministry of Transport... But things were much warmer inside for a meeting between the IMRF Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (APRC) Vice Chairman Michael Vlasto, APRC Board Member and IMRF CEO Bruce Reid, APRC General Manager and IMRF Trustee Zhang Rongjun and the China MOT International Cooperation Department.

Deputy Director Mr Zhang Xiaojie hosted the meeting, which was also attended by Ms Lv Juan, Division Chief of the International Organization.



The Ministry recently approved 300,000 RMB for the APRC to build on the work done by the IMRF on Mass Rescue Operations, recognising that MRO is one of the big challenges facing SAR services in the Asia-Pacific Region with many countries facing regular large-scale maritime SAR events. Mr Zhang Xiaojie explained that the Ministry's support recognises the increasing influence the IMRF APRC has in the Region and in the wider international SAR community. He also commented on the positive role played by the IMRF at the IMO.

The initial contribution funded the four-day MRO Seminar held at Shanghai Maritime University in December 2015 (see 'Mass rescue in Shanghai') and the development of MRO guidance documents and will provide a funding base for the APRC's MRO projects and seminars in 2016. The Ministry was also instrumental in getting agreement for a further 300,000 RMB donation through China Rescue and Salvage for 2016.

At the meeting Ms Lv noted a number of opportunities to cooperate even further in the future, with funding support, reaching out to other maritime administrations to encourage them to join the IMRF so as to build greater cooperation and collaboration, and also finding ways of sharing the knowledge and skills of the larger countries with developing countries, members assisting members.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to build on what has been achieved to date by the APRC, and a willingness from the Ministry to assist the IMRF build its presence in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The IMRF APRC delegation then met the Director General of IMRF members China Rescue and Salvage (CRS), Mr Zhang Zhenliang, and his Deputy, Mr Zhang Jianxin. Mr Wang expressed his thanks for the positive APRC Board meeting held the previous day and the exciting work plan being applied in the Region for 2016. CRS continues to evolve and with 30m people on Chinese waters every day – waters that experience the best and worst that the weather can offer – they still have work to do. Mr Wang reiterated

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CRS's ongoing support of the APRC through an annual donation, the secondment of Mr Zhang Rongjun and two staff, and the provision of the APRC office at the Donghai Rescue Bureau.



There was discussion of the *Dong Fang Zhi Xing (Eastern Star)* tragedy last June, when all but 12 of the 454 people aboard died in the ship's sudden capsizing on the Yangtze River. CRS is working with the APRC to provide a case study of the accident and pass on lessons learned. The accident occurred 1,000km from the nearest CRS base so there were major logistical challenges in just getting to the accident site. The conditions were extremely difficult, with rescue divers facing low visibility, strong currents and a very difficult riverbed. With three Rescue and Salvage Bureaux responding, the coordination of the search and salvage will prove an interesting study.

Concluding the meeting Mr Wang stressed the important role the APRC has in bringing information together to share with SAR organisations across the region, especially as regards developments in technology and equipment. CRS will be hosting the China International Rescue & Salvage Conference in Qingdao this year and have included the APRC Regional Development Meeting on the programme. This will provide APRC an opportunity to bring SAR organisations from across the region together to continue this sharing process.

MASS RESCUE IN SHANGHAI

In early December 60 delegates from some 15 countries gathered at Shanghai Maritime University for a mass rescue operations (MRO) training course and 'tabletop' discussion exercise organised by IMRF's Asia-Pacific Regional Centre (APRC) and kindly hosted and sponsored by the University and IMRF members China Rescue and Salvage. The IMRF also gratefully acknowledges the support of McMurdo and Trinity House for our ongoing MRO project overall.

The aims of the event were to enhance MRO awareness,

analyse the difficulties, consider the coordination and response issues, review relevant IMO and IMRF guidance, and assist with MRO project research. As well as attendees from the China Mainland and Hong Kong, international representatives came from Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, the Philippines, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya and New Zealand.

The course included presentations on

- mass rescue operations in the Asia-Pacific region
- an overview of the relevant international agreements and guidance, and of the IMRF's MRO project and the guidance available in our online MRO reference library
- China's maritime SAR development and international cooperation
- China Rescue and Salvage's MRO experience, and the mass rescue guidelines developed for CRS on SAR diving, firefighting and emergency towing operations
- the United States Coast Guard's passenger vessel safety program and the Coast Guard's MRO preparations
- the United Kingdom's arrangements for firefighting at sea
- a mass rescue incident in Taiwan resulting from the loss of a research vessel
- the cruise industry's response to maritime incidents in general and Royal Caribbean Cruises' sophisticated response to major incidents in particular, and
- the investigation of shipping accident injury severity and mortality.

All of these presentations are available for free download from www.international-maritime-rescue.org/mass-rescue-operation-training-course-shanghai-2015.

On the third and final day the IMRF's David Jardine-Smith led a 'tabletop' discussion exercise. Course attendees were asked to consider a developing scenario involving an engine room fire on a cruise ship. The exercise advanced in stages, with group discussions at each stage, as attendees considered the appropriate responses to a worsening situation which led in the end to a mass rescue operation at sea and the delivery of large numbers of people to places of safety ashore.

The exercise concluded, attendees were given a guided tour of engine room and bridge simulator facilities at the University, and of the China Maritime Museum, before taking an evening cruise on the Yangtze aboard a fine Maritime Safety Administration vessel, to view the lights of downtown Shanghai.

It was generally agreed that the course was a considerable success, and delegates returned home with a good deal to think further about. Discussing with partners the issues that arise in mass rescue operations, and potential solutions to them, is an important part of preparing for such rare, but very difficult, events.

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Our APRC colleagues intend to build on this success, with further MRO training events being planned for the future. Keep an eye on www.imrf.asia.



IT'S GOOD TO TALK...

As can be seen from the Dates for the Diary on page 2 – and as our CEO remarks on page 3 – there are several SAR-related conferences and workshops already on the calendar this year. The IMRF supports as many as we can: we know that good communication and the sharing of experience and ideas are key to SAR improvement and development.

Bruce will be speaking at the SAR Expo in Cannes in early March, and David Jardine-Smith at the Passenger Ship Safety Conference in Southampton in April. Please note that the organisers of this conference have offered free places to IMRF Members. If you wish to attend, you should register at www.passengershipsafety.com/conference-registration.php: click the 'Operators and Public Sector Go Free' button. The conference agenda may be found at www.passengershipsafety.com/conference-agenda.php.

IMRF Trustee Dean Lawrence will be among the speakers at the Australian & New Zealand SAR Conference on 1 June, and Andreas Arvidsson (see page 4) will be at SAR Europe in Copenhagen in June. Other IMRF colleagues are speaking there, too; and at the conference planned for Helsinki later in the month.

We will tell you more about our planned participation in the 5th ISAR conference in Kuala Lumpur in July and ICE-SAR 2016 in Reykjavik in October a little nearer the time – and keep an eye on LIFE LINE and the IMRF website for further announcements of opportunities to talk, listen, share and learn.

And finally...

We hope that you have found this issue of *LIFE LINE* informative and interesting. If you would like to contribute articles and pictures about *your* news, projects, events, ideas or lessons learned, please contact news@imrf.org.uk.