

# RNLI STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



## Use of Radio Equipment

### Validation

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<b>Pages</b>	5

### Objective

To ensure that the correct radio telephony procedures are followed on a SAR unit at sea.

### Reference Documentation

CoBT 1
Crew Members Handbook
TRG/6 – LRC
TRG/5 – VHF
TRG/6 - MF


### Checklist

SOP communicated and understood by all?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Hazards

Electrocution	

### Health and Safety

					
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## Scope

- Definitions
- Organisation
- RT Procedure on service
- Modified procedure on service
- Situation reports
- Procedure when not on service
- Routine tests

## Definitions

- **VHF Radio Telephone** – is the main channel of communications for SAR units. VHF RT communications are to be maintained with the primary shore station or Coastguard Launching Station or designated alternative VHF station and a VHF DSC watch is to be maintained whenever the lifeboat is at sea
- **MF RT Shore Station** – is normally the nearest MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) with which MF R/T communication is to be maintained whenever the SAR unit is at sea. This station will provide backup and overload communications for VHF. A MF DSC watch is to be maintained whenever the SAR unit is at sea
- **The Coastguard Launching Station** – is the Coastguard Co-ordination Centre normally responsible for maintaining communications and liaison with the Lifeboat Authority
- **The Lifeboat Authority** – is the Lifeboat Operations Manager or officially appointed Launching Authority

## Organisation

All messages to be transmitted from shore to a SAR unit by radio should be passed via the Coastguard.

The Coastguard should be informed of any messages relayed via other agencies such as Harbour Authorities or lifeboat station(see note).

All messages to the Lifeboat Authority received from a SAR unit by VHF or MF will be passed to the SAR unit via the Coastguard (see note).

**Note: Messages concerning the safety of the SAR unit during launch and recovery may be passed directly to the SAR unit.**

Whenever a SAR unit is about to launch for exercise or on service, the Lifeboat Authority will inform the Coastguard Launching Station and again inform them when the SAR unit has returned. The Coastguard Launching Station, in turn, informs all other authorities concerned.

'VHF channel 31 is allocated to the RNLI on a shared basis with other users. The Channel is intended for communication with SAR units and RNLI stations only. Communications should be kept to RNLI business e.g. during launching, recovery, exercises etc'.

## **RT Procedure on Service**

### **Before launch**

Whenever possible inform the Coastguard by telephone and pass crew list.

### **After launch**

As soon as possible after launch the SAR unit should advise the designated Coastguard Launching Station on VHF Channel 16 that the SAR unit is launched on service or exercise. A time check can be obtained and, if necessary, the crew list passed on a channel as directed by the Coastguard.

When requested to do so by the VHF Primary Shore Station, the all-weather lifeboat is to establish communications with the Coastguard Co-ordination Centre in whose district they are operating, this should be done via MF DSC frequency 2187.5 kHz and requesting a working frequency of 2182KHz.

If that MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) has no MF capability, the all-weather lifeboat should establish communications with the nearest MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) with an MF capability, which will relay on behalf of the lifeboat. That MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) will assume responsibility for maintaining communications with the all-weather lifeboat.

After establishing communications with the MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) on 2182KHz the all-weather lifeboat is to maintain constant loudspeaker watch on Channel 16 VHF and 2182 kHz MF unless otherwise instructed. A VHF and MF DSC watch should be maintained at all times. On return to Station the lifeboat must advise the MRCC (ROI) and CGOC (UK) that they are closing down on both VHF and MF.

All-weather lifeboats are fitted with MF , MF DSC, VHF and VHF DSC. When at sea a watch should be kept on appropriate DSC distress channels (2187.5kHz and VHF CH.70). Under GMDSS operation commercial vessels are not obliged to keep a distress/listening watch on CH16. These ships normally monitor CH13 for bridge-to-bridge navigational safety at sea. When not on service SAR unit should endeavour to keep a dual watch on CH16/CH13 in known areas of commercial ship traffic. SAR units will not dual watch on service unless a second radio is fitted.

**Note: SAR units are not required to comply with government legislation relating to the carriage of GMDSS equipment.**

VHF Channel 16 is for Distress, Urgency and Safety communications and for establishing contact between stations. In order to relieve congestion on this channel, and to permit communications with other Coastguard Co-ordination Centres and Mobile Units, the SAR units should be prepared to shift when requested by the MRCC or CGOC. During these periods the Coastguard will relay relevant messages received on Channel 16 to the SAR unit. Some Coastguard Co-ordination Centres monitor 2182kHz for the purposes of establishing contact with vessels on MF. (The international distress watch on 2182kHz has ceased worldwide.) Should the SAR Unit wish to establish contact with the MRCC or CGOC then a DSC individual call on 2187.5 kHz is to be sent to the MRCC or CGOC. A watch should revert to 2182 kHz on completion.

VHF should be used in preference to MF when conditions allow. It is the only means of communicating with Inshore lifeboats.

In the event of a SAR unit moving out of VHF range (they must establish contact with the MRCC or CGOC prior to going out of VHF range), or losing contact on VHF, or if the SAR unit experiences difficulty with the primary station on MF, they should establish contact with any UK MRCC or CGOC with MF capabilities.

If that fails, then the SAR unit should make contact with a foreign Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC) or Coast Radio Station (CRS) and request they relay.

A map showing positions of RCCs and CRSs is located in the TRG/46. Normal communications should be restored as soon as possible, and all concerned informed when this is achieved.

In the event that no shore station responds to a SAR unit's call, the SAR unit should make an 'All Ships' call requesting vessels in the area to relay the message to the nearest MRCC or CGOC.

If the SAR Unit is unable to respond to calls for a particular period on VHF or MF she is to inform both VHF and MF Shore Stations as appropriate.

When safely in harbour on return from service the SAR unit is to report 'closing down R/T watch' to both VHF and MF Stations concerned.

#### **Modified procedure on service**

Provided that:

- The SAR unit is within range of a Coastguard VHF or MF Station (Primary Station)
- The service did not originate with a DSC Distress or Mayday message
- It is unlikely that help from ships at sea will be needed
- A prior arrangement has been made with the Coastguard Co-ordination Centre; communication may be maintained using VHF Channel 0, VHF Channel 67, VHF Channel 73, VHF Channel 10, or the Coastguard Station MF working frequency

In the event of the service deployment in such a way that help from shipping is required, all concerned should revert to VHF Channel 16 and 2182 kHz.

If modified procedure is being carried out on VHF Channel 0, 67, 73, or 10, all weather lifeboats should maintain an additional listening watch on 2182 kHz. The Coastguard Co-ordination Centre will guard Channel 16 for the SAR units, though it may be possible for SAR units to monitor Channel 16 when facilities are available such as a VHF DF receiver.

If modified procedure is being carried out on the Coastguard Co-ordination Centre MF working frequency, maintain additional listening watch on VHF Channel 16.

If communication fails during a service that has started off using modified procedure, all concerned should revert to VHF Channel 16 and 2182 kHz.

### **Situation Report**

**ALBs** – Every 30 minutes while on service, and hourly when on exercise or on passage/trials, report your position and intended movements to the nearest Coastguard Co-ordination Centre or MRCC. If a message cannot be cleared on VHF, pass it to the nearest MRCC or CGOC with MF capability, or any ship and ask them to inform the Coastguard.

**ILB's and Hovercraft** – Every fifteen minutes report your position and intended movements to the Coastguard.

**Interrupted Service** – If the SAR Units veers down or anchors or takes shelter inform the MRCC or CGOC and give details of arrangements made for listening watch.

### **Procedure When not on Service**

Trials, Exercises, Passages etc – when launched for purposes other than on service, inform the MRCC or CGOC of the duration of the operation, your route, expected time of arrival and availability for service if required.

The procedure on service should be tested during exercises and communications exercises.

Transmissions on VHF Channel 16 and 2182kHz should be limited to establishing communication; procedural exercises should be carried out on VHF Channel 0, Channel 31, VHF Channel 67, VHF Channel 73, and VHF Channel 10 or on the Coastguard MF working frequency. Test calls should be made to any appropriate Coastguard Co-ordination Centres on VHF or MF.

### **Routine Test**

**Weekly Test** – at least once a week a communications test should be carried out afloat or from the boathouse with the VHF Primary Stations. The boathouse radio, portables and tractor/land rover radios also need testing. The emergency aerial will need to be rigged on an ILB. Activated on an ALB and the nearest MRCC or CGOC called to prove functionality. MF tests are best carried out whilst at sea by prior arrangement with the nearest MRCC or nominated secondary station with MF capability.

**DSC Tests** – Live MF DSC tests are to be made once a week or on launching with a MRCC, CGOC or CRS. VHF DSC tests are to be made via the internal test facility at the same interval.