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COMSAR.1/Circ.60
30 June 2022

PROCEDURE FOR ROUTEING DISTRESS ALERTS

1 The Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR), at its ninth session (21 to 30 June 2022), clarified the routeing of distress alerts in order to merge the requirement of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) with the established international operational search and rescue (SAR) procedures.

Shore-based SAR communication network and operation

2 To exploit the full advantages of globally integrated satellite and terrestrial communications, the GMDSS necessitates the establishment of an efficient communication network between rescue coordination centres (RCCs) with their delimited SAR regions (SRRs). This will consist of interconnecting links between RCCs in accordance with arrangements made by the Organization in support of the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979. In addition, each RCC will need rapid and effective communication links with its associated coastal stations, recognized mobile satellite service shore-based facilities and Cospas-Sarsat mission control centres.

3 The shore station nearest to the reported distress position should, whenever possible, acknowledge the alert. Other shore stations receiving the alert should acknowledge it if the nearest station does not appear to respond. The shore station which acknowledged the alert must establish and maintain communications with the unit in distress until relieved of its duty.

4 The first RCC, which is the RCC affiliated with the shore station which first acknowledged the alert, should assume responsibility for all subsequent coordination of SAR operations unless and until that responsibility is accepted by another RCC which is in a better position to assist.

5 If it is not at once clear which RCC has become the first RCC because more than one shore station has acknowledged the alert, the RCCs concerned should, as soon as possible, agree which is to become the responsible RCC so that the incident is responded to promptly. Follow-up action by the first RCC to coordinate SAR activities or to refer action to a more suitable RCC should also be carried out promptly.

Flow diagram

6 A flow-diagram for communication and procedures for routeing the distress alert, depicting the recommended actions of the "first RCC" that receives the distress alert, is given in the annex.

7 Member Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of their SAR services, coastal stations and all others concerned.

ANNEX

ACTION OF THE "FIRST RCC" FLOW-DIAGRAM

