



FLEET SAFETY AND SECURITY MANUAL

7.0 DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS FOR SHIPBOARD OPERATIONS

7.E.6 SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ensure the safety of Canadian Coast Guard vessels and crews when engaged in Search and Rescue Operations.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The **Commanding Officer** is to ensure that Search and Rescue Operations are conducted in compliance with the policies and procedures contained in the *National Search and Rescue Manual (DFO 5449)*.
- 2.2 **All personnel** aboard a Canadian Coast Guard ship involved in Search and Rescue operations are to be aware that their paramount responsibility is to ensure the safety of their own ship and their shipmates.

3 PROCEDURE

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 SAR Coordination - Joint Rescue Coordination Centres (JRCC) and Maritime Rescue Sub Centres (MRSC) are authorized to task Coast Guard ships and helicopters for Search and Rescue incidents only. The directions of JRCC/MRSC do not override the responsibility of the Commanding Officers for the safety of their ship or their crew. Commanding Officers should advise JRCC/MRSC immediately when a situation would exceed the capabilities of the ship or their crew.
- 3.1.2 Under all circumstances, when a vessel is directed to SAR incidents, the Commanding Officer shall notify the Regional Operations Centre as soon as possible of the vessel's change in programmed activities.

3.2 Medical Evacuation

- 3.2.1 When advised by the attending medical care provider that a medical evacuation may be the best course of action to deal with survivors, Commanding Officers shall coordinate the evacuation with the appropriate authorities.

3.3 Search and Rescue Dedicated Equipment

- 3.3.1 Refer to *CGFO #207 - SAR Equipment On Board Coast Guard Ships* for the SAR equipment required to be carried aboard Coast Guard ships.

3.4 Navigation Bridge and Resources

3.4.1 Officers standing navigational and engineering watches, and ratings assigned for navigational lookout duties, are not to be assigned tasks related to the conduct of the search and rescue operation that would interfere with the safe navigation of the ship.

3.4.2 When assigned OSC duties, if the Commanding Officer of a CCG vessel judges that the workload associated with the OSC duties may interfere with the safe navigation of the vessel, anchoring or removing the vessel from active SAR operations are to be considered after consultation with JRCC/MRSC.

3.5 SAR Operations

3.5.1 Firefighting and Damage Control

- a) Coast Guard ships and their crews have neither the special training nor equipment to conduct firefighting or damage control aboard other vessels. As such firefighting and damage control on stricken vessels shall not be attempted unless such action is vital to saving a life and the chance of success is high. In deciding to attempt such operations, the Commanding Officer shall consider the limited training and experience of his or her crew to fight fires on other vessels as well as the capabilities and limited equipment of his or her own vessel and the existing situation aboard the stricken vessel.
- b) Vessels on fire with no lives at risk will not be boarded. However, Coast Guard ships may support interior fire-fighting efforts aboard stricken vessels through the provision of equipment and advice but these efforts must be led and conducted by the stricken vessel's own crew operating in accordance with the stricken vessel's fire-fighting plan. In the case of smaller vessels without a fire-fighting team or onboard fire-fighting plans, the fire must be under control before a Coast Guard crew can enter interior spaces.

3.5.2 Assistance to Disabled Vessels

- a) The general policy pertaining to salvage can be found in Chapter 4, *Salvage of Civilian Property*, of the *National Search and Rescue Manual (DFO 5449)*. The policy pertaining to the provision of assistance to disabled vessels found in Chapter 7, *Assistance to Disabled/Abandoned Vessels* and the associated Annex 7A of the *National Search and Rescue Manual (DFO 5449)* was updated by Coast Guard Management Board and will be published in the Canadian version of the *International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual (IAMSAR – Volume IV)*. The approved policy is contained at Annex A to this procedure until such time as the IAMSAR – Volume IV is published
- b) When considering towing as an option permitted under this policy, Commanding Officers shall consider their own vessel's capabilities, the situation on the stricken vessel, and the training and experience of their crew.
- c) Tows are to be conducted in accordance with the accepted practice of seamen.
- d) On large Coast Guard ships where powered towing equipment has been fitted, crews must be familiar with such equipment's use.

- e) Once the towing operation has commenced, it shall be abandoned if an unsafe situation arises during the tow. The Commanding Officer shall inform the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre/Marine Rescue Sub-Centre (JRCC/MRSC) in order to provide for an alternative arrangement.
- f) The crew of the stricken vessel should be evacuated only when staying aboard could compromise the safety and well being of the crew.

3.5.3 Search and Rescue Training Exercises

- a) Prior to the commencement of SAR exercises with DND resources, a tasking order is to come from the regional operations centre. The Regional Operations Centre will advise the vessel of the location, date and time of the exercise. Regional Operations Centre to advise JRCC / MRSC of the commencement and completion times of the DND training exercises.
- b) Prior to commencement of the exercise, the vessel OIC / Commanding Officer is to have a briefing on the mission with the Helicopter / Vessel Captain. This briefing shall include emergency procedures.
- c) For Cape Class vessels, all hoist training exercises with the DND Cormorant helicopter will be restricted to the bow only.
- d) During training exercises, CCG fleet vessels are not to be used as datum for air dropped rescue equipment.

4 DOCUMENTATION

- National Search and Rescue Manual
- Ship Competency Profile
- Personnel Training Records
- SAR Equipment Inventory

ANNEX A - EXTRACT FROM DRAFT CANADIAN IAMSAR – VOLUME IV

Extract from Draft Canadian IAMSAR – Volume IV

Assistance to Disabled Vessels – General

It is recognized that the timely provision of towing or other technical assistance to disabled vessels in distress or non-distress incidents can be an effective way of meeting the national SAR objective of preventing loss of life and injury.

This statement is not, however, intended to convey to the public that the Federal Government or its agents are prepared to assist disabled vessels merely on request. The Federal Government or its agents will not compete with commercial or private interests to provide assistance. Some incidents involving the use of the SAR system are clearly preventable or unreasonable. The response to these incidents occupies resources that may be needed for more serious incidents and may place responders in unnecessary danger.

For disabled vessels in distress or potential distress situation, towing or other technical assistance may be provided by the Federal Government or its agents where the timely provision of this assistance is judged by the Commanding Officer of the assisting vessel to be the most effective way of contributing to the saving of life, provided it can be done within the capabilities of the assisting vessel and without imperiling the assisting vessel, or tow, or persons on-board either the assisting vessel or tow.

For disabled vessels in non distress or non-potential distress situations, in order to prevent more serious safety risks from developing, towing or other technical assistance may be provided on an as available basis by the Federal Government or its agents only after efforts to obtain commercial or private assistance have been carried-out and have failed to resolve the situation.

If a disabled vessel requesting assistance in a non-distress or non-potential distress situation refuses commercial or private assistance when available, this shall be considered as a cancellation of the initial request for assistance. The master of the disabled vessel is to be notified accordingly.

Assistance to Disabled Vessels – JRCC/MRSC Procedures

The JRCC / MRSC shall facilitate the provision of assistance to disabled vessels and if necessary, the participation of Search and Rescue Units (SRUs) of the Federal Government or its agents. An appropriate case classification shall be assigned to this activity. Available SRUs may, however, not be capable for such operations, so the JRCC/MRSC must consider their capabilities, the risks involved and the type of disabled vessel, with the tasking.

No waiting period should delay the tasking of any mobile facility to any situation where there is a doubt as to the safety of persons at sea.

When the master of a disabled vessel requesting assistance during the Uncertainty Phase of a SAR incident (non-distress or non-potential distress) is in direct communication with an MCTS Centre or a JRCC / MRSC and has advised that persons are in no-immediate danger:

ANNEX A - EXTRACT FROM DRAFT CANADIAN IAMSAR – VOLUME IV, CONTINUED

- 1) The JRCC / MRSC, normally through the MCTS Centre, should advise that the owner/operator make their own arrangements for assistance;
- 2) If the owner/operator is unable or unwilling to secure arrangements for assistance, the JRCC / MRSC should request that the MCTS Centre issue a Maritime Assistance Request Broadcast (MARB) alerting all private and commercial vessels in the area of the need for assistance and thus giving them the opportunity to provide this assistance;
- 3) If there is no response to the MARB, in special circumstances, the JRCC/MRSC may attempt to contact other mobile facilities that could, if willing, provide an expeditious response;
- 4) Only after a lack of response to the MARB (the normal amount of time to wait for a reply to a MARB is fifteen minutes) and other JRCC/MRSC contact efforts as outlined in point 3 above, the JRCC/MRSC may task a SRU of the Federal Government or its agents to respond and provide assistance as required; and
- 5) The JRCC/MRSC must advise the appropriate enforcement authorities of the details of the incident to support actions preventing similar incidents from occurring in the future. Special emphasis should be placed on situations when the SAR Mission Co-ordinator and/or the Commanding Officer of the assisting vessel reasonably believe that the disabled vessel had to be assisted because it is un-seaworthy or otherwise in violation of the Canada Shipping Act, and / or the regulations made hereunder or other Statutes of Canada.

Although the JRCC / MRSC should not routinely engage itself in obtaining third party assistance for a disabled vessel, in exceptional circumstances and in complete consultation with the owner / operator of the disabled vessel, the SAR Mission Co-ordinator may aid in co-ordinating commercial or private assistance. The owner / operator will always remain responsible for any and all costs incurred. It must be made clear to the supplier and the end user of the assisting service that the CCG or the Crown has no contractual or other obligation whatsoever in this arrangement.

In response to disabled vessels in non-distress or non-potential distress situations, tasking for the provision of technical assistance by CCG SRUs incidents remains a high priority for safety reasons, but may be considered a secondary priority to other CCG taskings (i.e. fisheries enforcement, pollution clean up, etc.). In consultation with the Commanding Officer and appropriate CCG Regional Operations Centre, departure on the tasking may be reasonably delayed until such time that the SRU has completed the critical mission or another SRU may be tasked as dictated by the circumstances of the incident. This same principle applies to other SRUs of the Federal Government or its agents.

SRUs of the Federal Government or its agents shall not be tasked nor provide a tow to disabled vessels for the sole purpose of getting from one place of refuge to another.

To prevent more serious safety risks from developing, SRUs of the Federal Government or its agents may be tasked to provide assistance to vessels aground with people onboard only when such operations incur no further endangerment to lives or property and commercial assistance is not available or cannot be on scene in sufficient time.

JRCC/MRSC SAR Mission Co-ordinators shall not task SRUs of the Federal Government or its agents to engage in salvage operations for vessels with no persons on-board. Requests for this type of assistance shall be forwarded to the appropriate regional authority.

ANNEX A - EXTRACT FROM DRAFT CANADIAN IAMSAR – VOLUME IV, CONTINUED

Assistance to Disabled Vessels – Search and Rescue Unit Procedures

It is recognized that the timely provision of towing or other technical assistance to disabled vessels in distress or non-distress incidents can be an effective way of meeting the national SAR objective of preventing loss of life and injury.

Towing assistance by Search and Rescue Units (SRUs) of the Federal Government or its agents will be provided only if the Commanding Officer of the SRU determines that the operation is within the capabilities of the assisting vessel and can be conducted without imperilling the assisting vessel, or tow, or persons on board either the assisting vessel or tow.

Such operation should always be to the nearest place of refuge or to a rendezvous position where the tow can be safely transferred to commercial or private mobile facilities.

On arrival at the place of refuge, it is not the responsibility of the SRU to secure the disabled vessel, however, the Commanding Officer may take such action as is necessary, having due regard for the circumstances of the case, to ensure that the disabled vessel is safely secured or anchored.

SRUs may have to cast off the tow in order to respond to a distress situation or incident of more serious nature. In instances when the persons onboard the disabled vessel consider themselves to be in potential danger and wish to abandon, the Commanding Officer of the SRU should consider the risks and if prudent to do so, evacuate these persons and continue on with the more serious incident with the knowledge that these persons may have to remain onboard the SRU for an extended period. The Commanding Officer shall notify the JRCC/MRSC of the action taken.

When any SRU has a disabled vessel under tow and commercial or private assistance arrives on-scene, the Commanding Officer shall hand over the tow to the commercial/private vessel provided it appears capable and the transfer can be conducted safely.

Technical assistance other than towing may be more appropriate in some circumstances. Any fuel or provisions transferred to the disabled vessel will be strictly on account of the owner / operator of that vessel.

Whether written or verbal, the towing conditions must be formally explained by the Commanding Officer of the SRU to the master or person in charge of the disabled vessel as per the format shown in annex C3 – Towing Assistance Instructions.

**ANNEX A – EXTRACT FROM DRAFT CANADIAN IAMSAR – VOLUME IV, ANNEX C3 --
TOWING ASSISTANCE INSTRUCTIONS, CONTINUED**

TOWING ASSISTANCE INSTRUCTIONS

I, the undersigned _____ declare being the owner/operator of the _____, registered under the official number or registration or license number _____ do hereby request that the Canadian Coast Guard Ship (or other vessel) _____ provide my disabled vessel with towing assistance. In doing so, I declare being of sound body and mind and perfectly aware of the dangers and risks of a towing operation, for myself, for all persons on board the vessel, and for the vessel and its equipment.

I also fully understand the following:

- The towing operation will be to the nearest place of refuge, or to a rendezvous position where the tow can be safely transferred.
- Upon arrival at the nearest place of refuge, the Search and Rescue Unit will release the towline and depart and it will be my responsibility to secure my own vessel.
- If there is a more serious situation elsewhere, the towline will be released or transferred and the towing operation will be ended immediately.
- The Search and Rescue Unit may release the towline and end the towing operation if such operation poses risks to safety of the resource.
- If adequate commercial assistance arrives on-scene, the Search and Rescue Unit may hand over the tow. I will be liable to any charges from that commercial resource.
- The Canadian Coast Guard or Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Government of Canada, Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada and any of their employees are not liable for damages suffered by the vessel, any of its equipment, its owner, master, operator, person in charge, crew or passengers, if the towing operation has to be abandoned, or if the damages occurred despite due diligence and competent work of the master and crew of the Search and Rescue Unit.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness (if any): _____

Approved by Director General, Fleet

**ANNEX A – EXTRACT FROM DRAFT CANADIAN IAMSAR – VOLUME IV, ANNEX C3 --
VERBAL TOWING ASSISTANCE INSTRUCTIONS**

VERBAL TOWING ASSISTANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Name of Master / Owner / Operator or person in charge of the disabled vessel:

Name of Vessel: _____

Official / Registration or license number: _____

Port of Registry or Home Port: _____

- Do you understand that the towing assistance provide by ____*_____ will be to the nearest place of refuge or to a rendezvous position where the tow can be safely transferred?
- Do you understand that upon arrival at the place of refuge, we will release the towline and it is your responsibility to secure your own vessel?
- Do you understand that the towline may be released anytime during the operation and the towing operation could therefore be ended?
- Do you understand that if private or commercial assistance arrives on-scene, this Search and Rescue Unit may hand over the tow and you will be liable for any charges from that assistance?
- Finally, do you understand that the Government of Canada, the ____*_____ and any of their employees are not liable for damages suffered by your vessel, its crew or passengers, at any time during the towing operation or if the towing operation has to be abandoned or if the damages occurred despite due diligence and competent work of the master and crew of the Search and Rescue Unit?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

* = name of organisation providing assistance i.e.: Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, etc.

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