



# Gibraltar Maritime Administration

HM Government of Gibraltar

Watergate House  
2/8 Casemates Square  
Gibraltar

Tel (+350)200 46862 / 200 47771 /200 50424  
Fax (+350) 200 47770  
e-mail: [maritime.survey@gibraltar.gov.gi](mailto:maritime.survey@gibraltar.gov.gi)  
[maritime.registry@gibraltar.gov.gi](mailto:maritime.registry@gibraltar.gov.gi)

## Shipping Guidance Notice 108 Search and Rescue Cooperation Plans on Passenger Ships

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To: Ship Owners, Operators, Master's, Classification Societies and Recognised Organisations

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### References:

- MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 Guidelines for preparing plans for cooperation between Search and Rescue Services and Passenger Ships;
- Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Survey, Certification and Safety) Regulations 2004, as amended.

### 1. Introduction

The Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Survey, Certification and Safety) Regulations 2004 apply the provisions of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) in Gibraltar.

SOLAS requires the carriage of plans for co-operation between passenger ships and relevant Search and Rescue (SAR) services. This requirement resulted from the sinking of the ESTONIA, and other accidents involving passenger ships. In the interests of safety and efficient emergency response, the requirement applies to all Gibraltar registered passenger ships.

MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 Guidelines for preparing plans for cooperation between Search and Rescue Services and Passenger Ships, provide a uniform basis for the establishment of plans for cooperation between passenger ships and SAR services in accordance with SOLAS Regulation V/7.3.

Plans developed in accordance with MSC.1/Circ.1079/rev.1 as amended, would be deemed as meeting the requirements of SOLAS Regulation V/7.3.

### 2. Scope and Requirement

The Gibraltar Merchant Shipping (Survey, Certification and Safety) Regulations 2004 apply to all Gibraltar registered passenger ships and other passenger ships in British Gibraltar Territorial waters (BGTW).

The owner of a ship to which the Regulations apply shall ensure that a set of SAR cooperation plans have been agreed with the relevant SAR services, and that the plans are kept up to date.

### **3. Search and Rescue (SAR) Cooperation Plans**

All Gibraltar passenger ships and all passenger ships in BGTW must have on board an agreed and up to date plan for cooperation with relevant SAR services for use in the event of an emergency.

The aim of the SAR cooperation plan is to ensure that ship and its crew, members of the Company<sup>1</sup> emergency response team ashore and relevant SAR authorities are able to work efficiently together during an emergency.

Information such as the basic details of the passenger ship, the owner/Company who has assumed the responsibility for the operation of the ship and the SAR services (including direct contact details of all parties) should be exchanged and maintained ready for use.

Common frameworks for drawing up plans are available within the Annex of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1 as amended. The framework of the plan should be modified according to the size of the vessel concerned and its area(s) of operation (Section 5 of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1, as amended refers).

A simplified plan is available for the use of ships transiting many SAR regions, such as cruise ships (Appendix 2 of MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1. as amended refers).

### **4. Periodic Exercises**

The relevant regulations require that SAR plans for cooperation include measures for periodic exercises to be undertaken. The purpose of the periodic exercise is to test the plan's effectiveness.

Where possible, the periodic exercise should be incorporated into the Company's existing exercise schedule, such as those already being undertaken in accordance with the International Safety Management Code, so as to include the relevant SAR services and test cooperation arrangements without imposing an additional burden on ship's staff. The programme of exercises should also aim to ensure that, so far as possible, all staff are able to participate over time.

The frequency and type of exercise depend on the circumstances in which the ship operates.

Gibraltar registered passenger ships are required to exercise its plan for cooperation annually. Ships are not required to exercise their plans for cooperation more than once in any twelve-month period. The GMA recommends that over time, ships undertake exercises with each of the SAR services along her port rotation.

The fundamental principle of cooperation should be tested during exercises. "Live", "coordination" and "communication" type exercises are acceptable.

"Table-top" exercises, SAR seminars and liaison exchanges involving crew, shore-based Company emergency response team personnel and SAR service personnel are considered to be beneficial.

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<sup>1</sup> *Company: The owner of the ship or any other organisation or person such as the manager, or the bareboat charterer who has assumed the responsibility for operation of the ship from the owner and who, on assuming such responsibility, has agreed to take over all duties and responsibility.*

Gibraltar passenger ships operating within BGTW are also recommended to exercise annually with the relevant SAR services.

Further details on periodic exercises are contained in Section 9 of the MSC.1/Circ.1079/Rev.1.

#### **5. Maintaining the cooperation plan up to date**

Owners/operators should ensure that each SAR cooperation plan is kept up to date. The review, updating and auditing of SAR cooperation plan should be carried out as part of the ISM safety management system (SMS).

Dylan Cocklan  
Maritime Administrator

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